

THE LANGUAGE OF DRAMA: a study of the way in which people accomplish the dramatic presentation of experience.

by Peter Millward

#### ABSTRACT

This study uncovers some of the methods and practices by which people involved in drama manage to make their activities meaningful.

From an everyday, commonsense point of view drama is seen to reflect life, and the implication that it is meaningful by reference to an objective reality is found in the writings of many drama specialists. This view, though, is often belied by their practice.

If, as from the ethnomethodological perspective, this sense of objective reality which appears to be characteristic of ordinary life is treated as a managed accomplishment the prop by which drama may be seen as meaningful is removed. We can no longer say drama is a make-believe activity dealing with everyday experience and leave it at that.

We shall see, rather, that the dramatic presentation of experience is the same kind of activity as the presentation of everyday life, for both aspects are created and sustained by the same practices. The ways by which we indicate that our presentation of the social life is to be treated as real or make-believe then become interesting.

By focusing upon the managed quality of personality, relationships and context, and by uncovering the work of those involved, we may see how drama can put us directly in touch with life. This has implications for learning and for the kind of teaching that can take place whilst people present experience dramatically.

This dramatic presentation is also like a well-made play for it is structured, purposeful and explicable; every line can be accounted for, and the manner of its meaningfulness made clear. In the end, drama is not meaningful in that it is life-like, but that, like life, it is made meaningful. Drama may be an aspect of our lives rather than something we do with them.

THE LANGUAGE OF DRAMA

A study of the way in which people accomplish  
the dramatic presentation of experience

In Two Volumes

VOLUME ONE

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#### Declaration

The material contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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This study is bound in two volumes. It should be quite possible to read volume one without reference to volume two, but much would be lost for the notes and references have developed into a kind of commentary upon the text and should be consulted fairly frequently. The second volume also contains the full transcript of the taped recording of the work upon which the study was based, and a copy of that tape is available. Whilst much of the transcript is reprinted in the text it is important to have a complete copy always to hand. The bibliography is at the end of volume two.

## Chapter One.

### DRAMA AS A MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY.

1. I hope, through this study, to throw a little more light upon the way in which drama works so that we may come to see more clearly the nature of dramatic activities. More specifically, I am concerned to examine how it is that drama may be regarded as meaningful, for I take it to be an activity engaged in by persons with intentions, who seek to create and present an observable 'world' which they, and maybe others, experience as familiar. So, whilst we do not have to understand what is going on, we have to believe that something 'meaningful' is taking place when we witness, or take part in, a piece of drama. I want to see how people manage, through their use of talk and through their actions, to make dramatic situations appear meaningful.

### DRAMA.

2. I am aware that the use of the word 'drama' may be confusing. As Michael Fleming points out(1), the activities referred to as drama can be very varied, and few accounts would seem to satisfy all occasions. It is not simply that ideas about the nature of drama have changed over time, but also that experts in drama sometimes seem to have difficulty in talking sensibly to one another(2). It may be that we have done a lot of talking from our own points of view, and thereby failed to create a common language through which to share



ideas. Yet, as Gavin Bolton says,

'There is little to be gained by attempting to learn "Bolton's terminology"'(3).

The situation can appear even more muddled when we look at the work of individual teachers and find it difficult to define what they do. What kind of definition, for instance, would do justice to dramatic activities described as being,

'in context, out of context, teacher-in-role, teacher narration, dramatic playing, performance, projection, symbolisation, distancing and game structures'?(4)

Yet all of these may be found in one person's teaching plan. And what are we to make of an interview in which Dorothy Heathcote(5) spent much of the time convincing David Davis that her work was still drama? We live in muddled times and it is not easy to be clear about the nature of Drama.

3. Definitions of drama seem to bring out particular aspects of the activity (the performing or educative force, for instance) in order to serve a point of view(6). Alternatively, they are too general to be very useful, and of the 'Drama is life' variety(7). As I do not want to fall into the trap of providing a definition just to suit my thesis, it might be better to draw attention to one or two aspects of drama about which we could expect to find general agreement. For instance, might it not be safe to say that drama is a collaborative activity? Surely most people would agree about that, and surely anyone involved in drama would

see it as being 'meaningful' and as being part of our make-believe experience? These things seem to be at the heart of all drama, and we could probably go on in this vein for quite a while, adding to the list. The problem for me, though, is that in my determination not to be too precise at this stage (and get the reader thinking along particular lines before he has a chance to make up his mind), it becomes difficult to say what I mean when I use the word 'drama'. I am quite likely to end up with a definition which is either highly prescriptive or else too vague. In either case it is unlikely to serve me well.

4. I think it best, therefore, to let you, as the reader, hold to your own general view of drama, for I would like this study to work through your experience rather than mine, and I would like you to take from it what you feel you may. There is, after all, much more here than I can make sense of, and if it is to be useful it has to connect with your understanding of drama. I do not want you to be bound by my definitions; at least, not yet. For those who find this approach unsatisfactory (and maybe even irritating), a peep now at the notes accompanying this chapter would reveal a number of definitions with which I am in broad sympathy(8). Better still if such people would turn to Chapter Four, 'Getting Drama Going'(9), they would see (as a group of children move into drama) the kind of dramatic activity I am concerned to examine. I have to

say, though, that this will become apparent as the study proceeds, and those who can bear to wait may do well to look no further and be content to see as we go along what I mean when I use the term drama. There are occasions when it is more sensible to work towards definitions, and I would not want anyone to be put off at this stage, as they discover that I shall be talking about a kind of drama which does not seem to concern them.

#### HOW IS DRAMA MEANINGFUL?

5. If we are concerned to see how drama works we must be concerned to see how it is made meaningful, for in making any situation meaningful we are also making it visible. In this sense we are aware of situations as they have meaning for us, and that is the case even when we do not understand what they mean. To study the way in which drama is made meaningful is to study how it works and how it is seen. The two are aspects of each other, and this will become apparent as the study proceeds(10).

6. From a commonsense point of view we are inclined to think that drama is made meaningful by reference to the real world of social experience. There is, for instance, the everyday world which we all share, which appears to us to be objective, stubborn, relentlessly demanding and from which there is no escape. Then, over and above this, lies the world of make-believe which has to be continually created and sustained by those involved, and

which exists only for so long as they have a mind to let it do so. It is, in the words of Dorothy Heathcote,

'the difference in reality between the real world where we seem to "really exist" and the "as if" world where we can exist at will'(11).

So, we tell stories, paint pictures, play, pretend and do drama in order to keep the make-believe alive. The everyday world, meanwhile, simply takes care of itself. It provides a standard, a point of common experience, which may be recreated through our drama and by which that drama is made meaningful. Drama is something we do in our lives. This is a commonsense point of view.

7. This everyday understanding is applied to all kinds of drama and not just that which is most 'life like'. We might, for instance, consider the different forms of drama as though they existed along a continuum. At one end would be that drama which attempts to recreate the social world as it is lived, in a naturalistic way and demanding from its actors performances that are 'true to life'. We might think of the naturalistic style developed by Stanislavsky and the Moscow Arts Theatre in this regard, and the affect it had upon much American drama of this century. Indeed, it is a view of the nature of drama which we can trace back (in England, at any rate) to Ben Jonson and his demand that plays should deal with

'deeds and language, such as men do use'(12).

At the other extreme, though, we could expect to find the more abstract forms of drama which seek to present a



view of human experience not immediately recoverable by looking at the everyday world. I have in mind here the highly stylised forms close to movement, dance and mime, and those plays that are heavy with symbolism. We might follow another strain in modern drama, from Ibsen and Strindberg through Pirandello to Beckett, Ionesco and 'the theatre of the absurd', much of which would tend to lie towards this end of such a continuum. However, if drama is to be meaningful, if it is to be more than gymnastics or idle, indulgent grunts it has to keep 'in touch' with life. We will not attend for long if we cannot understand what is going on, and there is only our experience of the world to provide a basis for this understanding; we have to be able to connect, and our drama has to be relevant. Furthermore, that we do understand what is happening in this make-believe world of theatre encourages us to believe that it connects with a 'real' world which we share in common with one another. This commonsense view of the relationship between drama and real life seems to hold true whether we see drama as a reflection of life or as a temporary release from harsh reality. We do drama, and drama is meaningful because we do drama in a meaningful world.

8. Many people involved in drama, though, would probably see themselves as working somewhere between these two extremes and their drama as providing a kind of comment upon life, illuminating dark corners and unravelling awkward knots. They may, of course, see it

as an opportunity to extend the boundaries of everyday experience, but even when they do they cannot step beyond the bounds of possibility. Actors may encounter alien beings, soar without wings and die for love, but our drama, our make-believe, cannot describe the ineffable. It has to relate in some way to the life we lead, or could conceivably have lead.

9. Such a commonsense view of the meaningfulness of dramatic activity can have important consequences for the drama that we do. By treating it as meaningful, in that it relates to the everyday world, we are encouraged to see it as a kind of reflection, a mirror to nature, and this may lead us to act 'as if it were real'; to imitate the words and actions of our lives. At best such performances can be technically powerful and an audience may be filled with admiration, but in school they are more likely to be but pale and awkward copies of a life which is 'the thing itself'. As Gavin Bolton suggests,

'In many of our schools we have trained children to "switch on" imitative emotional display, so that they give a demonstration of anger and hostility in a way that has little to do with real feeling'(13).

10. By treating drama in this way we are also inclined to see it as 'purposeful'; as being useful. We may see it as a kind of 'preparation for life' and a chance to practise that we may live better lives. Tom Stabler points to the way in which

'dramatic play performs important functions'(14), as though it served a purpose. When we see drama as

'useful', we justify time spent in the activity in terms of our 'real lives', and we move beyond the drama in order to see it as worthwhile. I am concerned in this study, though, to demonstrate how drama (and dramatic play) is, in itself, worthwhile, and I want to show that we need not (and should not) look elsewhere for its value or meaningfulness. A page or two later, for instance, Tom Stabler puts the question 'What is accomplished through play?', and in so doing encourages us to look at the intrinsic value of the activity. All too often, though, we are left in our schools to justify drama in terms of its contribution to the children's 'real' lives beyond the drama, or to other subjects on the curriculum.

11. This kind of assumption about the meaningfulness of drama, this commonsense point of view, seems to crop up again and again in the literature. Dorothy Heathcote, for instance, speaks of drama 'as depicting life'(15), and then argues that

'the teacher's insistence on the truthfulness of the work is sufficient emphasis for the depiction to become meaningful'(16).

She talks of drama as being the

'exploration of the affairs of humankind'(17).

Brian Watkins describes drama as a

'model of the social interaction we experience everyday'(18).

He draws our attention, as well, to the young child who

'in his make-believe play recreates and represents experience'(19).

Cecily O'Neill talks of 'dramatic representation'(20),  
of

'measuring the fictional against the actual'(21),  
and she refers to Beckerman(22) who called the theatre  
a window through which we might look at some aspects of  
life. She emphasises the 'fictionality' of drama and  
describes the

'pretense of theatre and the dual awareness with  
which we receive and respond to that pretense',  
and she refers to the essential activity of drama as  
being the

'construction of a realm of illusion'(23).

Gavin Bolton speaks of drama as

'second order experience'(24),

and Michael Fleming can say with some confidence,

'surely all of drama must in a sense be pretending',  
and must involve 'appearing to be'(25). Behind all of  
these extracts there seems to lurk the idea of a real  
world, out there, stubborn and unforgiving and within  
which, and about which, we do some drama;

'for the way it [drama] works, as we well know, is  
that it creates a world within the real world, a  
fictional existence governed by rules of our own  
making'(26).

We are ordinary, everyday people doing drama, and that  
drama is meaningful because we keep 'in touch' with our  
ordinary, everyday lives. This is a commonsense point  
of view, and it can be read into the writings of  
professional drama teachers.

12. When Dorothy Heathcote suggests that people

engaged in drama are

'using language to help them make sense of a situation'(27),

we can feel the force of this 'duality' between everyday and make-believe experience. On the one hand there is the drama (people using language) and on the other the 'situation', a kind of theatrical set painted from real life and within which they can act meaningfully. We may feel this 'duality', as well, in the words of Betty Wagner when she says,

'in drama, children expand their awareness by focusing their attention on a mutually agreed situation',

and even more forcefully when she speaks a little later of the child,

'being thrust into a situation in which she had a chance to bring to bear those past experiences and feelings that were called for in this newly imagined situation'(28).

We may feel strongly the kind of 'gap' which seems to exist between the child and the situation in which she finds herself, for we do not feel that Wagner considers the situation as being itself an aspect of just those feelings and past experiences which the child brings to bear, and which, through her activities, makes visible. Rather, her language implies that the situation exists beyond the capacity of those involved as actors to make it exist. Drama may then be seen as

'concerned with [the] examination of human issues in specific social contexts'(29).

We need a background to give meaning to our make-believe, and we lift this background (the

'situation', the 'social context') from our experience of real life. We do then within that background the kind of things we ought to do and we provide, in Ken Byron's words,

'contexts for language use'(30).

For those involved in the drama, the questions then to be asked are of the order, 'What would happen in such a situation?', and 'What would you do now?'. They imply, of course, a real world within which such considerations are not met as questions but dealt with as actions. It is these actions which the people doing the drama are attempting, thoughtfully, to reproduce.

#### HOW IS DRAMA MADE MEANINGFUL?

13. However, though it may be quite easy to demonstrate through quotations of this kind that the commonsense view of the relationship between drama and real life is to be found in the writings of professional drama teachers, a careful examination of their practice often reveals activities which we would not want to describe as 'copies of life', giving rise to the production of 'pretend worlds'. We should not be beguiled by the 'outer form', and would do well to take note when Dorothy Heathcote says,

'I never make dramas in the simulation mode,/ Where that which takes place pretends to be "as it might have been". The outer form may often show it as being so..the inner action denies this outer form'(31).

Indeed, that which is rather more characteristic of their work is a kind of 'generative force' within the

dramatically presented situation which must give the lie to any suggestion that it is only a representation of the real thing, designed, perhaps, to make up for the impoverishment of our everyday lives. It is not just that their drama provides the opportunity for those involved to reflect upon and understand more clearly the experience of living, but rather that it is, in itself, meaningful, and of itself, a part of their lives. The meaning of the drama (as this study is concerned to show) is an aspect of the work done by those involved in presenting experience dramatically. The aim, then, for drama becomes 'the making of meaning'(32), rather than the representation of a meaningful reality, and it draws upon the child's 'capacity to create meaning'(33). In this we may see children,

'as agents as well as recipients of experience [who may say] we are making it happen so that it can happen to us'.

This is Gavin Bolton's

'living through mode(34)...the existential living-through structure of "the play for the children"' (35).

14. Dorothy Heathcote is making a similar point when she talks of,

'the ability to make a situation really meaningful from within for the participants rather than just outwardly seeming to be meaningful'(36).

She is making a distinction between the way in which drama seems to be meaningful and the way in which it is made meaningful. It will be a central concern of this study to demonstrate what is involved that people can

'make a situation really meaningful from within'. In this, the study should provide a kind of 'methodological base' from which to view much current practice, a means to see what lies behind such claims as this. As Dorothy Heathcote makes clear later,

'the act of dramatising is the act of constructing meaning, which may also involve the interpretation of meaning'(37).

There is no suggestion here that this 'meaning' has to be 'taken from life'. Indeed, as David Davis argues, the 'role-play' developed by Dorothy Heathcote is

'qualitatively different from the role-play in social and life skills "drama", because what Dorothy Heathcote is seeking to find is the "universal at the centre of the particular". That is to say that from the start of building the play she is not concerned to build a one-to-one relationship between the role-play and the real world, i.e. this boy standing for this particular English soldier but she is concerned through the particularisation of the role to find the universal that belongs to all those who have been in that position, i.e. defeated but defiant'.

Davis then adds that

'...the drama teacher needs to be working to distort the role-play away from simulation (i.e. a one-to-one correspondence with real life) towards the universalisation of that experience..' (38).

15. Clearly there seems to be an extra quality of 'meaning' in this drama work which is not present in 'simulation', or in a simple copy of 'real' life. It has a 'meaningfulness' over and above the 'real' world. It is not divorced from the 'world' but it means more than the 'real' world. I hope to show that this 'extra meaning' is part of an attitude to the experience rather than an aspect of the situation itself, and to show that



we can draw this kind of 'extra meaning' out of very ordinary everyday experiences when we have a mind to do so. Rather than simply being meaningful, in that it relates in some way to the everyday experience, drama may develop a meaning which floods back into the everyday world affecting our experiences of that world. Michael Fleming makes the point well,

'The drama will obviously draw on subject matter drawn from life and will necessarily make reference to the real world but that is a different matter from accurately representing the real world'(39).

16. Gavin Bolton is also concerned to emphasise the making of meaning within dramatic situations, though it is clear from his writing that he sees the 'real' world as playing a necessary part in the process. What is not clear is how he sees this 'real' world. As he reaches the central point of his book, 'Towards a Theory of Drama in Education', he talks of drama as being,

'primarily concerned with change in appraisal, an affective/cognitive development'.

He describes this learning as

'a change in the value given to a situation or concept'(40),

and it can read as though that concept or situation existed beyond our ability to make it visible. Of course, it is difficult to write about these things without giving a kind of stability to everyday experience(41), but this account does seem to suggest that we learn as we see things differently, as we understand them differently, and that implies that there are things to be seen and understood. We are encouraged

to think of an 'objective meaning' available to us all, an 'actual concrete context', which is 'given'. Indeed, Gavin Bolton is concerned to show that we learn as the relationship between

'the collective subjective meaning [of those engaged in the drama] and the objective meaning'

is changed. He describes the medium of drama as

'the interaction between two concrete contexts' (42).

In this sense, drama works as account is taken of the relationship between the dramatic and actual contexts (43). The relationship is complicated but it does seem to depend upon a reality which lies beyond our drama. We may feel as we read these accounts that the real world is made up of such situations and concepts and the purpose of drama is to help us to see them more clearly, or on a different level. Indeed, drama of this kind (when it is seen in this way) is not only useful in our lives but depends upon the juxtaposition of actual and make-believe contexts for its meaningfulness.

17. Gavin Bolton does not speak about the 'actual concrete context' beyond saying that it exists and that it is a part of the meaningfulness of our drama. He concentrates upon the relationship between the real and the fictional. This is not surprising for his concern is with the dramatic experience. It seems to me, though, that if we acknowledge the contribution made by the everyday world to the meaningfulness of drama then we have to examine the nature of that world and not

simply take it for granted. If we do not do this, it may seem as if we are making assumptions about its 'facticity' (in that we are treating it as being 'objectively real') and if we are, then we may spoil our chances of fully appreciating the work done within drama to make it meaningful.

18. John Norman stresses the active and interactive engagement of those involved in drama in which there is 'no meaningful given truth but rather that relative and socially constructed framework which we make for ourselves'(44).

In describing dramatic activity in this way (and rightly, I think) there is the danger that he over emphasises the 'factual' nature of everyday experience. He talks, for instance, of aiming to

'explore past, present and future experience' as though it existed in some way, over and above our ability to present it. He writes of making

'sense of the world in which we live and our place in it',

as though the everyday life were something 'given' and with which we have to put up. Drama then becomes a means of coming to terms with our lot. I am sure that he would not mean it in this way, but this kind of emphasis upon the managed quality of the dramatic experience (as compared with everyday life) may lead us to miss a very significant point concerning the way in which drama can affect our lives. Rather than just helping us to make sense of our world it can show us how we make sense of it, how we work to ensure that it

appears to us as a 'shared in common world'. It is part of the purpose of this study to uncover the methods and practices whereby we make life meaningful, and this whether we are presenting it dramatically or as everyday experience.

19. For in the end we may come to feel that this distinction between the objective reality and the fictional reality is quite hard to sustain. In answer to the question, "It takes so long to prepare, do you ever get to play?", Dorothy Heathcote replied,

'I would say you are always in the play whenever the mind's image begins to affect how you're feeling about what's going on here...[when the experience] is filled with a "round of expectancy". This is going to be about something that matters. So you see, to me the play is not the action, the play is when we're starting to have that point of view, that frame of mind, that starts to find it important'(45).

This seems to me to be of great significance, for it stresses the attitude of individuals towards experience and surely such an attitude could be an aspect of everyday as well as of dramatic experience? Can we be encouraged to feel that experience may be real or make-believe according to how we agree to treat it, rather than because of some inner quality specific to each area (for instance, that one is real and the other make-believe)? There are certainly no clear cut boundaries between the two, and it is important that we do not treat drama as a representation of life, a kind of copy of the real thing. This is not just because such copying is hard to do well or that it emphasises

the functional role of drama, but because it fails to do justice to the nature of the dramatic experience. Gavin Bolton warns of this danger when he says that the

'....emphasis on the importance of the resemblance of things is more insidious than an artificial acting style. It undermines the very essence of the art form of theatre. Theatre is nothing if it does not deal in powerful symbols. That it is both concrete and symbolic is what distinguishes it from other arts. If the symbolic element is taken away, as naturalistic theatre tends to do, theatre's life-blood has been removed. Our children and our teachers have inherited an anaemic conception of dramatic art as imitation of concrete actions. Responding to and creating symbols, the very basis of all work in art, has been neglected'(46).

Furthermore, such an 'anaemic conception' also prevents us looking properly at the nature of the everyday experience, for life, too, is undervalued if it is seen simply as something which we can represent through our drama. Gavin Bolton contrasts drama with everyday life when he describes it as,

'deliberately created second-order experiences removed from the rawness of living'(47),

but in so doing, he fails to do justice to the ordered, symbolic, collaborative, meaningful nature of that everyday life. It is only when we turn our attention to the way in which we experience our social life as real that we can come to appreciate fully the nature of the dramatic experience.

20. The commonsense view of the relationship between make-believe and everyday experience is founded upon certain assumptions concerning the nature of reality; its facticity, and its 'taken for grantedness', for example. It may be though, that such assumptions,

though natural enough, are ill-founded and that the everyday world is not something which we just have to confront but rather the product of much hard work. If everyday social experience is treated as a 'managed accomplishment', in the way that we normally treat make-believe experience, then the relationship between make-believe and reality will need to be re-examined. We shall have to search elsewhere for the source of the meaningfulness of our drama. It is with this search that we shall be involved from now on and we shall begin by looking at the ethnomethodological perspective in an attempt to cast more light on the ways in which we go about the business of making everyday life seem real and meaningful.

THE ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

1. The ethnomethodological point of view cannot be contained properly in one chapter, and any attempt to present it so briefly is bound to appear inadequate. The purpose of this section is not, therefore, to give a description of ethnomethodology(1), but rather to provide a context through which we might approach the central concern of the study; an ethnomethodological account of the way in which people go about the business of presenting experience through their drama. The nature of ethnomethodology should become apparent as this account unfolds, but in the meantime it is important to appreciate something of the way in which the ethnomethodologist approaches the study of the social life.

SOCIAL EXPERIENCE AS A 'MANAGED ACCOMPLISHMENT'.

2. As I am concerned to see how it is possible for people to act meaningfully in drama, I need a perspective that will focus upon the 'meaning-making' activities of those involved; the work they must do and the kind of knowledge they require in order to make their presentations visible and meaningful. The Ethnomethodological approach can provide such a perspective.

3. The ethnomethodologist treats the social world as a 'managed accomplishment'. In doing so, he declines to take it for granted, as though it were simply 'given to

us', ready and waiting to be studied(2). Rather, he treats the social world as being presented and sustained by the activities and interpretations of those involved (3). In this sense, the significance of objects and events is an aspect of the way in which they are treated, and we 'see' them as they are presented and as they are kept before us. The social life exists in the manner through which we attend to it. It is not simply available to be 'lived through' and experienced(4).

3. Such a point of view, such a 'bracketing of social reality', puts the ethnomethodologist in touch with the methods and practices by which people in everyday situations present to themselves and each other a 'world' which has all the appearances of being a 'shared in common' world(5). The phenomenon for investigation then becomes, as Benson and Hughes make clear,

'the methods by which experience is found to be rational, just, factual, topical or whatever'(6).

By declining to accept the social world as 'given', as 'something to be studied', the ethnomethodologist asks instead, how is it that people work together to construct a 'shared in common' world that is so obstinately familiar, so persuasive and so 'real in its consequences', that sociologists, for instance, can devise schemes of reference, typologies and statistical methods in order to examine and measure it(7). We might think to ask as well, and from an ethnomethodological point of view, how it is that novelists, playwrights and drama teachers can create situations which seem to



reflect a life 'out there' which appears to us as real and palpable. For with this presentation of the social life as being a 'factual reality', comes the idea of language as reflecting and describing the 'real' world of natural objects and social relationships. With it, too, comes knowledge (enshrined in that language), and the sense that 'meaning' is given, and that all we have to do is look about us that we might see what is going on or else be 'put in the picture' by those who know. From within such a model, drama may be treated as a kind of playful copy, a representation of this 'real' world. It becomes then, as we noted in the previous chapter, a reflection, an illusion about a reality, and it is meaningful in that it connects with that reality. Clearly, though, if the 'real' world is treated from the ethnomethodological perspective as a product of the 'managed accomplishment' and part of the work which members do in order that it should appear real, then the relationship between drama and everyday experience ought to be reconsidered.

4. It is important to appreciate that all of this is not to say that the ethnomethodologist doubts the existence of a 'shared in common' world, or that he holds to a,

'general scepticism about the existence of an objectively available reality'(8).

Rather he is concerned to

'point to some of the ways in which the world is rendered objectively available and is maintained as such'(9).

The ethnomethodologist wants to show what people have to do in order to find their experience meaningful. He is concerned to uncover the methods and practices by which the social life may be seen as 'real'(10).

THE NATURAL ATTITUDE.

5. In our day to day lives, of course, we do treat social experience as though it were shared in common (though from different points of view) by those about us. Whilst it is true that people can, and do upon occasion, suspend belief in the facticity of the social world, ordinarily they do not, and in everyday life we treat this as an aspect of our experience of the world, and life as being (of itself) real and significant. The meaning (of life) may be beyond our ken, but we do not treat it as being meaningless. We treat the social life as something about which it makes sense to speak, and in treating our everyday experience as though it were real (and presenting it that way) it is bound to appear so. Our faith in its facticity must not be shaken if we are concerned to talk sensibly. The 'facticity' of the social world is an aspect of our ability to present it as having a stability beyond that presentation. It is just this 'facticity' which the drama teachers mentioned in Chapter One draw upon in order that their work should be meaningful.

6. This 'natural attitude'(11) by which we treat the social life as having independent existence beyond our individual perceptions of that life, is not to be seen

as some kind of error into which we have strayed and from which the ethnomethodologist might be expected to deliver us. Rather it is a necessary attitude that we must adopt if the social world is to appear a meaningful place (though whether or not it is, is not the issue). We just have to take this attitude towards 'experience', and present it through our talk and our actions, if we are to share meanings (as we seem to do) and feel that we understand what is going on(12). It is by viewing the 'everyday world' through the 'natural attitude' that we receive a sense of its social structure, that we can see it as patterned and ordered; that we can see it as having meaning(13).

7. This is the social world as it is encountered by

'the wide-awake, grown up man who acts in it and upon it amidst his fellow men'(14),

and who experiences it as reality. In this, it contrasts directly with our understanding of dramatic experience(15), for we see this everyday world as one which,

'...existed before our birth (and which was) experienced and interpreted by our predecessors as an organised world. Now it is given to our experience and interpretation'(16).

Later we shall be able to pass it on (modified and changed to be sure, but still organised and still, we trust, intact) to those who come after us. This is part of what it means to see the world through the natural attitude(17).

8. It is also characteristic of this view that we

treat the social world as an intersubjective one, and one that is 'out there', available for all to see and share. We cannot engage in the world of everyday experience and, at the same time, see it as a 'managed accomplishment', for the way in which we make the world sensible is simply not available to us as we go about the business of making it sensible(18). The world of daily living is of practical interest.

9. It is important to appreciate features of this kind for they can be seen as a model for our sense of social structure, as a description of the way in which we normally see and relate to the world. It should be familiar to us all. It is a world which stubbornly refuses to go away and yet which, paradoxically, we have to create and sustain. The way in which we manage to do this we shall look at now.

#### THE 'MANAGED ACCOMPLISHMENT'.

10. In order to approach everyday experience through the natural attitude, those involved (as well as those who seek to understand what they are doing) have to make certain assumptions. These assumptions are invariant and cross cultural, and they are a necessary aspect of social interaction(19). People have to assume, for instance, (even as they know it cannot be) that they share a common view of the world and that while

'they are biographically unique, the experiences of each are sufficiently congruent to permit them to ignore any differences that might be due to personal experiences and perceptions "until further notice"'(20).

Such assumptions enable us, for all practical purposes, to see the world in the same way (even though we may have a different point of view). They enable us to talk of shared meanings and to feel that we understand one another. Furthermore, we can draw upon our different perspectives to account for our different interpretations. Indeed, without such assumptions we would not even go about the business of bothering to understand.

11. It is important to appreciate that there is not here some kind of 'cognitive consensus' to account for the meaningful nature of the social world(21). It is, rather, a tacit agreement between those involved in making the situation meaningful. The agreement is to abide by assumptions of this kind and to treat one another as though each had access to a 'shared in common' world. This is part of our concern to make sense of what is going on.

12. In a similar way we have to assume that people talk and act 'in good faith', and that they will say things that are,

'recognisable, intelligible and embedded within a body of common knowledge'(22).

We assume that they are speaking sensibly and this leads us to ask them what they mean when we cannot make sense of what they say. It does not mean that they are talking sense in some absolute way (described, say, by reference to a 'real' world, 'out there' and beyond us, which is inherently meaningful and which their language

reflects), only that we trust them to be so talking. It is upon this trust that we take each other's contributions and so are concerned (and able) to make them meaningful(23).

13. In order to sustain this 'normal forms'(24) appearance of talk, it is necessary to make further assumptions. For instance, in our everyday conversations we speak and act in a deliberately vague manner as we leave the intended meanings of our expressions unstated (this we have to do in order to avoid the endless test of definitions and the infinite elaboration of context that would be needed to connect us to an 'absolutely meaningful world'). This means that the speaker has to assume that the hearer will be able to fill in for himself the unstated but intended meanings of his expressions. At the same time, the hearer must assume that the speaker will say something at a later point in the conversation, that will clarify the words he is hearing at the moment. If this did not happen we would spend all our time explaining what we mean, and asking what we mean by explaining what we mean. Instead, we just wait and see. For, as people try to decide the meaning of an expression or an action, they assume they will have to go beyond the 'surface meaning' of the contribution and connect it with the context, with the setting and all which that entails(25). In other words, though we might think that words and actions are, in themselves, meaningful (and

need to believe that they are), we do not act as though they were, for we 'work' to find their meaning in the ways in which they are used. Meaning is located in the work done by those involved to give their experience stability and character so that it may appear to themselves and others as real. The ethnomethodologist concentrates thoughtfully (and with an effort of thinking) upon the ways by which members achieve (without a thought) a sense of occasion, and he does this as he treats social experience as a 'managed accomplishment'.

14. The methods and practices by which people in everyday life make that life visible, meaningful and 'real', are the main concern of the ethnomethodologist (26). They are 'situated' and, unlike the assumptions touched upon already, can only be uncovered by providing examples of their use(27). They are, in this sense, 'context specific', though they have application across different situations. They are at the heart of the 'meaning making' activity, for they are the means by which we give to 'experience' a sense of stability, the means by which we demonstrate to ourselves and each other (as well as to outside observers) that we share a 'shared in common' world. They are the practices by which we 'show' what we are up to: 'complaining', 'teaching', 'doing some drama', 'speaking ironically', 'joking', for instance, and the practices by which our contributions are understood and treated as examples of

'complaining', 'teaching', 'drama', 'irony' and 'joke telling'. It is through such 'situated practices' that we make the everyday social experience visible.

15. It will be my concern, in the ethnomethodological study of people creating and sustaining situations (and which will be presented in subsequent chapters), to uncover examples of these practices and to show how they work and how they are used. I do not intend, therefore, to look at them in any detail here. Further, to lift examples of such practices out of their context is to risk destroying their situated character and may detract from the work done by those involved to make their lives meaningful. Nevertheless, here is an example which might prove useful for it should help us to see the kind of work which has to be done so that our contributions may be understood. It comes from the transcript of a recording made as a group of ten year-old children discuss some of the problems of coping with cannibals(28).

16. One of the children suggests that they might find a 'nice' way of killing troublesome cannibals; like burning them. This brings a quick retort from another child (Mark) and he says,

'That's not nice. That's very nice.'(29). He speaks the two sentences just like that, and with no pause or interruption.

17. Of course, if we pay attention only to the words as they appear here the two sentences are contradictory.



If we did this we would be right to feel puzzled and to wonder whether he was agreeing or disagreeing with the suggestion that burning would be a nice way of killing cannibals. Yet at the time we all took his intended meaning and agreed with him that it was not a nice way to be killed. His words to us did not sound strange and no one was in doubt about what he meant. This was because Mark knew what to do in order to speak ironically and we knew how to interpret his words. We all made use of the practices of 'commonsense reasoning' in order to make the situation visible and meaningful (30). Furthermore, it is unlikely that anyone reading the transcript would mistake Mark's meaning, though he might find the way in which he put it curious. It could seem curious because the transcript fails to uncover all the practices whereby Mark demonstrates that he is talking ironically. However, even the person with only the transcript to put him in touch with the event would be likely to understand what was happening for, in treating these two apparently contradictory contributions as meaningful, he is alerted to the possibility that irony is being employed. This would be one of the ways in which he could account for the 'meaninglessness' of the two statements, one of the ways in which he could make them meaningful. His decision to treat the second statement as ironic would then be sufficient for him to supply the right context by 'reading in' the missing information carried through

tone, emphasis ('That's not nice. That's very nice'), expression and so on. The contradictory nature of these two sentences set side by side and the laughter which surrounds them (unrecoverable from the transcript, though you can probably 'hear' it in your mind), are practices through which the use of irony is indicated. They are also part of the context by which these words are found to be meaningful.

18. All of the children involved knew how to take Mark's words because they know how to recognise irony and because they helped (as they participated in the discussion) to assemble the kind of context through which it would be appropriate for Mark to speak in this way(31). No one was surprised by what he said for, in a sense, they were ready for him to say it. This is not to suggest that they knew what he was going to say, but that what he said 'fitted with' their expectations as they took account of the situation about them. It was a 'time' for irony (the 'burning' suggestion made it so), and they were able to laugh with him. Further, in laughing they drew out the irony in his words and helped to make his meaning plain. This is the sense in which the 'meaningfulness' of a situation is part of the collaborative activity of those involved, and it was because the context was so well defined and appreciated by the children that Mark was able to use these words in such an apparently contrary fashion and yet to such good effect. It is what is involved, though, if a

person is to use words which are appropriate to the situation so that they may be understood, and it cannot be done without help.

19. Examples of this kind should serve to shake our belief in the ultimate facticity of the social world, and they give the lie to a model of language as a system of stable meanings upon which we may draw in order to make life meaningful(32). After all, what meaning is there in the words 'That's very nice' when they can be used to mean 'That's not nice'? Clearly more is being done here than would be the case if these people were simply taking the social world (and its language, its meaning) as something which exists 'out there' and beyond us. We may see it this way, we may treat it and use it this way, but that does not mean that it is this way. We have to make our meanings clear, and to do that we have to collaborate with others to construct a context through which they may take our meaning. This is what it is to make the social world observable to ourselves and to each other, and this is what it means to talk of a 'managed accomplishment'.

#### MEANING.

20. It is important to appreciate at this point, that the collaborative making of meaning is not the recognition by those involved of a system of rules which govern social behaviour and determine what it means to act sensibly(33). We may, for instance, account for

Mark's use of language by inferring that he is speaking ironically, but there is nothing that we can point to in his contribution which compels us to treat it as an example of irony. He might, after all, be expressing a sudden change of heart, realising even as he speaks that from his point of view the burning of cannibals could be 'very nice'. He could even be referring to something else in his second statement, another suggestion for dealing with cannibals in a more humane manner, perhaps, and not recoverable from the transcript. Indeed, it would be possible for the teacher to deliberately 'discount' the irony in Mark's words by pointing out the contradiction within them ('Come on, Mark, make up your mind; is it, or is it not, nice?'). We all know, as well, what it means for a joke to fall flat because it was not taken for a joke. The point is that we have to interpret and make sense of his words and actions, and this is not done by referring to a system of behavioural rules(34). After all, what kind of rule might serve to explain what Mark is doing? Would it be of the form, 'when two apparently contradictory statements are set side by side, with the adjective in the second given special emphasis and accompanied by laughter and raised eyebrows, etc., the speaker is speaking ironically'? Or what sort of rule would be employed, for example, to ensure that when somebody says, 'Goodness, it's getting dark', her friend will turn on the light, or else get up and say, 'Time to be going', or draw the curtains, or

comment upon the quality of the hair dye, or....., and so on(35).

21. Such rules would need to be awfully complicated (36). They would also have to be 'context specific', and so even if it were possible to describe such rules for determining sense (and consider how many would be required only to cover all instances in which irony might be employed), there would still be work to be done by those involved, and at the moment of their involvement, in order that a particular contribution may be recognised as an example of the rule. The point is succinctly made by Barnes in a summary of one aspect of the influence of Wittgenstein's philosophy concerning the 'meaningfulness of language';

'Proper usage is developed step by step, in processes involving successions of on-the-spot judgements. Every instance of use, or of proper use, of a concept must in the last analysis be accounted for separately, by reference to specific, local, contingent determinants'(37).

22. 'Meaning' is made in situations where people act sensibly, and the 'rules' which they draw upon to make sense of the social world (even as they are used to draw our attention to that world) are 'maxims' of the order, 'this is the way we do things here', and not part of a system of cause and effect whereby particular responses are determined by particular actions. They are normative rules carrying conventional force and are used to account for behaviour and make sense of what is happening. They cannot tell us where we are going, but they do seem to tell us how we got here (and that is not

how we went about getting here). They help to tell us what a person is up to and they give to our experience a sense of social structure(38). Further, to 'break' a rule of this kind does not plunge us into a 'mess of meaninglessness' but is, itself, a significant act. As actors, we are 'condemned to be meaningful'(39), and when Mark deliberately 'contradicts' himself he does not speak irresponsibly ('Don't be silly, Mark, you can't have it both ways'), but uses his command of the 'practices of commonsense reasoning' to give extra force to his opinion. In 'breaching the norm' (of the order, say, 'do not contradict yourself') Mark gives his utterance extra significance, and demands from those involved extra attention that they may account for, and make sense of, his apparently strange behaviour and explain what he is doing. 'Life as usual' may be unremarkable but when the unusual occurs then there is work to be done. As John Heritage makes clear,

'normative accountability is the "grid" by reference to which whatever is done will become visible and accessible'(40).

These 'common norms' are to be treated as 'motives'(41) by which we may account for actions and by which we give a sense of structure to the social life; by which we make it visible. They furnish meaning for the behaviour, and that behaviour in turn supplies the meaning of the rule. In this sense, 'rules' are a part of a 'scheme of interpretation', part of members' methods for sustaining a sense of social structure.

They cannot, then, tell us what we must think, or say, or do(42).

THE STOCK OF KNOWLEDGE.

23. As we view the world in our everyday lives through the 'natural attitude', the kind of knowledge that we use is of a different order to that with which we are most familiar in schools and which seems to be characterised by the path to literacy and the 'forms of knowledge'(43). Alfred Schutz referred to this everyday, commonsense knowledge as the 'stock of knowledge at hand' and described it in this way;

'Man in his daily life....finds at any given moment a stock of knowledge at hand that serves him as a scheme of interpretation of his past and present experiences, and also determines his anticipation of things to come'(44).

This stock of knowledge is made up of recipes, social types, rules of thumb, definitions, etc., and may be thought of as 'the way we do things here'. When it is placed beside those 'accredited areas of knowledge'(45) which characterise schools as teaching institutions, and when it is placed beside the drive for literacy and numeracy, this stock of knowledge at hand might be dismissed as trivial, incoherent, situated and inconsequential. In this sense it may be seen to be in conflict with 'academic knowledge' and it seems to get but short shrift in our schools.

24. However, whilst it is the kind of knowledge required to present the everyday world of shopping, getting on buses and chatting to the neighbours, it is

also through the stock of knowledge at hand that we experience and present love and hate; that we cry, laugh, are jealous, lonely, afraid. It is the knowledge through which the 'great themes' of human experience are presented. It is the knowledge that we need in order to contribute as teachers and pupils so that we may produce a situation which is recognisable as 'teaching' in school. It is the knowledge whereby we demonstrate our humanity. It is (as will be shown) at the heart of the dramatic experience.

25. It consists, says Schutz, of the

'previous experiencing activities of our consciousness'(46).

It is all that we have done before and all that we have been shown, and this is so whether we could recount the experience or not(47). It is the way we go about doing things as 'members'(48); the way we go about using language to, say, ask for directions or start an argument; the way we interpret a situation (the words, the actions and the setting) as requiring a particular kind of response (laughter, perhaps) and the way we cope with a mistake if we get it wrong (confusion, embarrassment, apologies, tears, etc.). It is the way we know when we are listening to a joke, or can tell that a person is being serious or sarcastic (after all, they do not always tell us, and we are usually alerted when they try to do so: 'I'll be perfectly honest with you')(49). It is the way in which we recognise pain in others and act accordingly by giving comfort, aspirin or



running for the doctor. These are all aspects of the stock of knowledge at hand, and we have learnt it all (though not much of it has been taught) in just those situations where it has application. Once learned it is immediately available and may be drawn upon without a thought. It is the sum of our knowledge that we use to get about in the world, and this whether we are making a speech in the House of Commons, buying a railway ticket, complaining to a council officer or teaching a class of reluctant children. In this sense, our stock of knowledge at hand is characterised by our social experience.

26. It is also very hard to teach. Only imagine trying to teach a child how to pull a wry face, and then how to make use of that ability. Think of teaching ten year old children how to speak ironically, or how to recognise irony when it is used. You may not easily teach these things, yet even young children find such expressions familiar and meaningful. You cannot teach a person how to complain to a council officer, and to think that you can is to misunderstand the nature of the stock of knowledge at hand. Of course, it is possible to teach a person where to go to complain, how to present themselves properly, argue their case cogently, write a letter perhaps; but that is quite a different thing. For we are concerned here with what it means to feel (and recognise) a sense of grievance, with what one has to do to be accepted as 'complaining', with how one

is able to 'see' the council officer as a council officer and as a person to whom it would be sensible to complain. We are concerned with presentations and interpretations, with the kind of knowledge that two people draw upon as they go about the business of creating and sustaining a situation which may be recognised by themselves and other people as complaining to a council officer. It requires knowledge of the same kinds of things that would be needed in order to present a piece of drama about complaining to a council officer. It is knowledge about 'the way we do things here'(50).

27. It should be clear that this stock of knowledge at hand is the warp and woof of our social lives. It is rooted in the earliest interaction of the child with those about her, in the business of 'give and take' (51), and developed continuously through the cut and thrust of countless pre-school conversational exchanges. The words which we use, the way in which we use them and our stock of knowledge at hand are inextricably bound, and if we consider with Wittgenstein that the limits of our language may also be the limits of our world(52), then there is a very real sense in which our social world, our relationships, attitudes and feelings are all characterised by this knowledge and the way in which we make it work. For the relationship between the stock of knowledge and the social world is reflexive in that this knowledge is developed with experience even as it is used to interpret and make sense of that experience(53).

This is why drama may be so important, for we can create through our drama the kind of situations within which the stock of knowledge may be tested and developed, and through the application of which those same situations are made visible. It is this kind of relationship that sets us on our way to seeing what it means to say that a person is acting meaningfully(54), for in deciding what they mean we must pay attention to the situation within which they are speaking and which is presented through their words and actions. We have to 'see' what they are up to and 'make sense of' what they do. They have to act and we have to interpret their actions in an appropriate way. This is what is involved in order to convert 'raw behaviour' into everyday experience; to make bodies moving hither and thither into purposeful beings. Similarly, people involved in drama have worked together to construct the situation within which they can talk meaningfully and through which they can take each other's meaning. They have played their parts in presenting a situation even as they made it meaningful, and now they can set about seeing what they meant and how they went about the business of showing each other what they meant.

28. Everyone's stock of knowledge at hand is unique for we all have different experiences, but there is nothing within it that we can know alone. It is public knowledge held in a personal and singular way(55). Clearly there will be large areas of overlap between,

say, my knowledge and yours, and because it is socially derived, the areas of shared experience are determined by our relationships. For instance, I will share different areas of experience with members of my family, my peer group, with members of the opposite sex, and so on. I will share broad, general areas of commonsense knowledge with all mankind (perhaps the significance of smiling)(56), but some things I will only know in common with my closest friends. At the same time, the areas of common experience will depend, in part, upon my interests so that I might share whole regions of detailed knowledge with complete strangers. What we have to appreciate, though, is that each experience is modified by (even as it modifies) the stock of knowledge at hand. Husserl, for instance, talks of the 'sedimentation of meaning'(57), and

'the greater part is handed down to me by my friends, my parents, my teacher, and the teachers of my teacher'(58).

This does not mean, though, that it is the stuff we mean to teach in schools, for we are not easily aware that we are developing our stock of knowledge, and we would probably not be able (if asked by a disinterested observer) to explain our actions in terms of consciously formulated descriptions. It is not just that such 'descriptions' (like the rules for determining behaviour looked at earlier in the chapter) would prove impossibly difficult to produce but that this kind of learning takes place without an intention to learn(59). Rather

it has become a kind of habitual possession with us which we can draw upon at will, and which is always readily at hand. It is the way we go about doing things in society, the way in which we see people for what they are, and the way by which we judge an action and see it as meaningful. It is through the stock of knowledge at hand that we can tell what is happening about us, ascribe motives and intentions, act purposefully. It is through this that we recognise the world as a familiar place, even when we do not have the faintest idea of what is going on(60).

29. This stock of knowledge at hand

'embraces the most heterogenous kinds of knowledge in a very incoherent and confused state'(61).

It is not, then, the kind of knowledge that is likely to find favour in an educational environment wherein those involved look to clearly defined and accredited areas of knowledge and a regular system of evaluation. All the same, it does have a structure, though it is not of a sort which can be imposed from without or even built up conceptually from within. For the way in which the stock of knowledge is structured changes in accordance with the individual's practical or theoretical interests at a particular moment. As Heritage points out, the

'stratification of the actor's knowledge is largely pragmatic'(62),

and Schutz likens this knowledge of society,

'its organised ways and practices and its institutional life'(63),

to our ordinary knowledge of the geography of a town.

Some parts, of course, we know very well (say, the streets about our home), whilst others are very familiar, some only vaguely so, and yet others hardly known at all(64). When Dorothy Heathcote describes 'mantle of the expert' as a

'system of teaching [which] derives its syllabus and its structure from the matrix of society'(65),

and that, as such, it is socially based, she seems to be pointing to this kind of structure. It is a structure made visible in examples of its use, and we find the form as we make sense of experience and discover the social life. There is a sense in which we know what we need to know, and certainly we only make use of what we need to know in order to make sense(66). Everything that we say or do is interpreted 'sensibly', for otherwise it must remain beyond our experience(67).

Such an account of knowledge attaches 'knowing' to a situation within which the knowledge is useful and made manifest. In this, we can tell what we know when we see what we do, and we see what others mean as we make sense of what they say and do. Our knowledge is drawn out of situations (even as they are made visible through the application of that knowledge), our 'meanings' too. They are not 'grafted on', or given to us by people who think they know the things that we should know, and think, as well, that others should be able to 'take their meaning'(68).

30. It does not mean, though, that this knowledge becomes some kind of personal possession, characterised

by a purely subjective quality, and about which there can be no agreement or disagreement, no discussion(69): Nor have we to fear being stranded in a world where 'anything goes', for the setting in which we are involved (and which must include the members, their intentions, their own personal biographies, their life experiences, their interpretations of what is going on, as well as the words and actions by which the setting is presented) puts very real constraints on the knowledge it would be appropriate to draw upon(70). The things that we can say and do, as well as those things which we cannot say and do (if we still want to be taken seriously), are influenced by the setting. If our words or actions are 'inappropriate' we will be treated with some reserve, for we would be seen to be 'out of touch' with the stock of cultural norms and could properly be accused of talking nonsense. What the setting does not do, though, is determine what we have to say. It is this that is important.

31. One of the most pervasive features of social settings is the talk which goes on within them and through which they are characterised. As Benson and Hughes point out;

'In a fundamental sense, talk is constitutive of those settings in which it takes place'(71).

The same is true of the stock of knowledge at hand which is generally expressed through, and contained in, our everyday language. Schutz makes this very clear;

'The typifying medium par excellence by which

socially derived knowledge is transmitted is the vocabulary and syntax of everyday language....the pre-scientific vernacular can be interpreted as a treasure house of ready made preconstituted types and characteristics, all socially derived and carrying along an open horizon of unexplored content'(72).

That the stock of knowledge is contained in our everyday language, with all its apparent awkwardnesses, and its many infelicities, means again that it often receives little thoughtful attention in our schools.

Furthermore, the way in which the maxims, typifications, definitions, etc., are potentially equivocal and can lend themselves to multiple meanings (according to the context within which they are employed to present) may mean that they are treated with some distrust by teachers who depend for their position (as they are teachers) upon having access to knowledge not immediately available to those about them. As educators, though, we ought surely to be concerned with what the children know, as well as with what we know and they do not know, or only seem to know(73).

32. In all of this it is important to realise that though the stock of knowledge at hand differs in quality from that which is generally accounted 'knowledge' in our schools, it is, nevertheless, at the heart of all sense making activities. That it appears to receive only limited consideration is partly because it is so hard to teach and evaluate, and partly because it is the stuff of everyday life from which (so it may be thought) it is the purpose of academic knowledge to



deliver us.

33. It will be my concern to show in more detail how the stock of knowledge at hand describes our sense of social life, and how it may be developed and refined through the use of thoughtful procedures; through the presentation of experience dramatically. It will also be seen how, by reflecting upon our dramatic experience, we may connect our presentation of the world with that of others who have lived in different places and different times, and through this process of universalisation move towards the more rarified knowledge considered so important in schools. We will have come, though, by a different route and by way of our own experience(74).

#### INDEXICALITY AND REFLEXIVITY.

34. Before we come to look at the way in which everyday situations are managed and made visible, we should consider two other aspects of 'meaningful experience': indexicality and reflexivity. They are at the heart of the ethnomethodological perspective, though both have their roots elsewhere(75).

35. The notion of indexicality points to the way in which talk becomes meaningful. It shifts the meaning of words (and more especially, the meaning of sentences and accounts) away from some kind of 'inner semantic content' and towards the way in which they are used. In this sense words become meaningful only in so far as account is taken of the overall situation within which

they are employed(76). As Wittgenstein pointed out,

'an expression only has meaning in the flow of life'  
(77),

and, if you want to know what someone means, it is not enough to attend to their words, for you must come to 'see' what they mean as well. In order to make statements meaningful, we have to take account of the unique inter-relationship which exists between talk and action, and the setting within which such talk is embedded. Meaning is negotiated within a 'managed situation', and all the words which we hear are heard, and understood, as they are related to a context which we have assembled to deal with those words. In this sense the words stand as 'indices' to the kind of context that is required if they are to be heard as meaningful.

36. All talk and all language is to some extent indexical, but there are degrees to this indexicality. Everyday talk in the commonsense world of practical activity is highly indexical and makes very little sense when taken out of context, and an observer 'listening in', without taking part, would be likely to find such a conversation unintelligible(78). Indeed, he would be bound to, unless he could construct a context through which the words could be made sensible. It is simply not enough to 'overhear' a conversation, for much more must be done if you are to make sense of what it is that that you overhear. Even then, as we all know, it is possible to get hold of the wrong end of the stick(79).

37. This building of contexts is not to be seen as embedding language in a 'real' world without direct reference to which it would have no meaning. There are very few places where language can even touch the natural world in this way(80). Neither is it a matter of simply saying that we understand what a person means by looking at the context within which they speak as if it were some kind of colour chart or standard to which we could appeal. This cannot be done, because the context itself is not something that is fixed and dependable. It cannot be captured and examined, it cannot be reduced by description, for it is also a 'managed accomplishment', a continuously sustained construction which can be elaborated infinitely. And, in any case, as Wittgenstein made clear, a chart or standard would always require another by which it could be tested, and that, too, would need another, and so on(83).

38. For the ethnomethodologist, the idea of

'shared understandings and meanings is a point of departure, not something presupposed before analysis can begin. Shared understandings have to be shown as the outcome of interpretive actions, the outcome of the methods members use to resolve the "contingency of meaning"'(82).

It is not easy to see how it is possible to understand what a person means when his words are senseless (in themselves) and the context within which we might hear them as meaningful, is itself capable of indefinite elaboration. Yet clearly we do understand one another; furthermore, we regularly find that we have mistaken

another's meaning, and take some satisfaction from being able to say at last, 'Now I see what you meant'(83).

39. In order that we may see how this is possible it is important to realise that we do not need to assemble the same contexts for our words to be intelligible to each other(84). Indeed, we will not, if only because 'congruency of perspectives'(85) is an unattainable ideal. We should also remind ourselves that we are concerned with the way in which people manage to create and sustain a sense of understanding (of which statements like, 'Now I see what you mean', are a part). Common understanding is not the result of some kind of shared substantive meaning any more than 'meaning' itself may be seen as a cognitive consensus between people(86). There is no point in asking whether two people share a common meaning, for there is no means of knowing and every reason for supposing that they do not(87). We should think, rather, in terms of the ways in which people indicate to each other that they understand what is going on, and the way in which they seem able to keep going. In this sense, understanding presents itself primarily in appropriate action and language, for if a person can proceed 'correctly' within a situation (or indeed, with an argument or a calculation) then it seems perfectly natural to say that he understands it(88). As Wittgenstein points out elsewhere,

'To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be

master of a technique'(89).

It is the ability to fare forward that we should look for, and that which we are tempted to call the 'experience of understanding' might be roughly expressed in the words, 'Now I can go on from here', rather than as some kind of mental process. It brings with it a sudden sense of command, a relaxing of tension and a sense of self confidence (which may or may not be justified). There is a feeling of 'now I know my way around'(90).

40. There is not a point at which we can say, then, that we have arrived at the meaning of a situation, but only the continuous business of assembling contexts within which objects and actions can be 'seen and read' as familiar, as meaningful. Quite simply, we have to keep talking, and the 'meaningfulness' of a conversation is part of our ability to converse. Our understanding is demonstrated through appropriate contributions.

41. So, indexicality should not be used to point to the 'meaninglessness' of the social world but, rather, to the accomplished nature of meaning(91). It points to the amount of active 'interpretation' which has to be done in order that a situation may appear meaningful, and to the way in which this is managed through collaborative activity. We cannot see meaning as some kind of objective thing about which there can be no disagreement, and we should not be too worried that the very word 'meaning' seems to disappear even as we try to

grasp it(92). We work together to make a situation observable (and so, intelligible) to ourselves and to others, and we can agree about it if only because we 'built it' together, piece by piece, through our own contributions. We find it 'meaningful' by embedding the words and the actions in the settings which serve to elaborate them and give them sense. This we do as we present the experience of living (whether through dramatic or everyday activities).

42. The variety of ways in which words acquire their meanings is reflected in the variety of their uses. We are inclined to think that their existing use obliges us to apply them in such ways in other contexts; we seem to think that the meaning of a word demands it. But there is not this kind of compulsion in the use of words, for the meaning is beyond the word, and beyond the setting too. There is no 'rock bottom' to discourse, and the meaning of a word is its successful use in a language, its use in a social situation;

'Only in the practice of a language can a word have meaning'(93).

We can understand what a person is saying because we are continuously situating their talk in a context which we have helped to assemble in order to decide what they mean. In this sense,

'any communicative action is doubly contextual in being both context-shaped and context-renewing' (94),

and this brings us to the force of reflexivity. So, whilst meaning is context dependent, the process of

meaning construction is methodological; it is sequential, and there is always work to be done;

'The sense, reasonableness, understanding, significance of any talk or action is embedded, reflexively, in the setting of which (the talk and action) is itself a feature'(95).

And this we may come to see is as true for dramatic as for everyday settings.

43. When indexical expressions are used we have to bring to bear our commonsense knowledge of the situation in order to locate their sense. As we have seen, the context is never something that is given to us or that carries a stable meaning for it only exists in that it can be further elaborated. This does not mean, of course, that we have to do these elaborations (it is just nice to imagine two people furiously elaborating away in the hope that eventually they may come to some indestructable base where the elements are pure and where all knowledge may be grounded on fact enabling them to say finally and for all time, 'Ah, now I understand!'). We have already looked at the kind of assumptions we have to make to avoid doing this (96), and we have seen how the stock of knowledge at hand is structured according to what we need to know in particular situations(97). However, it is not just that contexts can be indefinitely elaborated in terms of our own experience that makes them so hard to pin down. Not only do these contexts (however vague and indeterminate they may be) give a sense of meaning to talk and action, they are themselves assembled through

the very talk and action they apparently serve to make meaningful(98). In making the setting observable to ourselves and to others, we are also making the talk and action (through which we do this) meaningful by reference to the setting we have created. In this sense, talk and actions are simultaneously in and about the settings they describe, and the making of meaning is part of the presentation of situations. This is the character of reflexivity(99).

44. In summary, then, it is through our talk and our actions that we make observable the social world as an objective place, and we achieve this through the natural attitude and the practices of commonsense reasoning. In making the setting observable to ourselves and others we assemble contexts within which our talk and our actions may be understood. Through this understanding comes the sense that we share 'meaning' and this reinforces our sense of the social world as a 'real' place, and ourselves as people within that world(100). However, the whole is a 'managed accomplishment': the 'real' world, the context, our sense of understanding, and it all needs to be appreciated in its entirety. In this way our talk and our actions in everyday life presume the 'facticity' of the social world even as they create it. Our talk and our actions assemble contexts of interpretation whereby they are seen as meaningful. This is the force of reflexivity. It points to the way in which social reality has to be constantly negotiated



(and re-negotiated) so that we can speak in a meaningful way, and so that the natural attitude (whereby we view the everyday world as real, and suspend doubt in its facticity) may be upheld. In this way we are able to 'keep going', for we find the world as we expect it to be(101).

45. The next chapter should provide an opportunity to demonstrate the approach to understanding social experience characterised by an ethnomethodological enquiry. Not only should it prepare us to look at the dramatic presentation of experience through the same perspective but it should also serve as a standard whereby the general theme (that the same methods and practices are used to make the social life visible in drama as in everyday life) may be validated. It should enable us to appreciate later, that make-believe experience can bear the same kind of examination as that used to explore the ways in which we make 'real' life appear meaningful.

46. We should also come to see how situations in our everyday experience (for instance, 'teachers and pupils discussing by-volcano living') have to be continually managed and presented. It should become apparent that contributions (in terms of talk and action) serve not only to tell us about the situation but are also a constituent part of the situation through which they are made meaningful. Then may we see that by declining to

take such situations for granted, it becomes possible to appreciate the work which has to be done by those involved to provide a sense of meaningfulness and stability, a sense that they have shared a common experience and that they understand one another. In later chapters we shall see the same kind of work produced by those concerned to present experience dramatically.

47. More specifically, the following chapter should enable us to see how a teacher works to get a discussion going, how people are constrained to contribute in a particular way and how 'inappropriate' contributions are dealt with. We should appreciate that a teacher cannot simply 'get up and teach', but has (with the co-operation of the children) to teach through (or alongside or within) the business of presenting teaching situations and making them visible.

Before reading Chapter Three it would be good to listen to the taped recording of the discussion upon which the analysis is based and look at the first part of the transcript in Volume Two.

### Chapter Three.

#### MAKING SENSE IN EVERYDAY LIFE. Getting a Discussion Going.

1. In this chapter I want to look at what it means to treat the everyday world as a managed accomplishment. In order to do this we shall examine a school lesson but will decline to take it for granted that teachers and pupils simply exist like poppies in a field, or that when, for instance, they come together to talk about volcanoes there is, willy-nilly, a teaching situation. In other words, we shall see what those involved have to do that they may be recognised as teachers and pupils.

#### GETTING STARTED.

01 Teacher. Now what we're going to natter about  
02 is....you people and me.  
(Extract from the transcript, page 1)

2. The teacher's first words to the group serve to indicate the nature of the teaching situation they are to engage in. She speaks 'as a teacher',

'Now what we're going to natter about is....you people and me.' (p.1: 01-02), and by speaking in this way she demonstrates the kind of teaching situation she is concerned to present(1). Moreover, though she speaks 'as a teacher' and is recognised by the children as a teacher, it cannot simply be taken for granted that this is a teaching situation or that those involved are already 'teachers and pupils'. The children had not been prepared beforehand; they were just asked to go along to the staffroom. A request of this kind would be considered unusual and it would leave them wondering.

Indeed, when reviewing the discussion afterwards, they offered several explanations to account for what they thought was about to happen(2). It is interesting that none of the children thought they had come there to be taught. Rather, they treated it as a kind of gap in the teaching day, as 'time out' from lessons. The situation that we could later review and reflect upon, that we could transcribe, discuss and make sense of, had therefore, to be produced and managed by those involved. Moreover, this would be the case were it a regular and looked for teaching occasion which this group of children and their teacher experienced, say, every Thursday morning at half-past nine. Engagements in the everyday world have to be made into 'teaching situations' (as they are made into shopping expeditions, arguments, marriages, etc.) and they have to be seen and treated as such.

3. Now this is not done by providing a kind of introduction, designed to indicate how each person should contribute to the discussion, in order for it to work properly. Rather, as the topic is introduced the teacher demonstrates the way in which it is to be handled, and through this she makes visible the situation in which they are involved. We see where we are as we engage in a situation which we find familiar and to which we can contribute in an appropriate way. The teacher shows it is a teaching situation as she introduces the topic, or rather, as she indicates that

there is to be a topic. By taking charge of the topic introduction she points to her own role as the teacher,

'Now what we're going to natter about is...'  
(p.1: 01). It is

not the topic which indicates her role (after all, we have only a hint that there is to be one at the moment) but the way in which it is introduced and the control the teacher enjoys over the way in which it is introduced. For instance, her use of the marker, 'Now', signifies that things have begun and that particular kinds of things have begun(3). Further, by using it she has given to herself certain 'rights' in the situation. The children readily accept this, for they see her 'as a teacher' and know something of what that role entails. So, because she is a teacher she enjoys extra 'rights' over the selection of the topic and the way in which it is to be handled, and because she draws upon those extra rights (as she initiates the exchange) she is seen by those involved, and by outside observers, as the teacher. To appreciate the force of this point, consider a 'pupil' opening a lesson in this way ('Now what we are going to natter about is...') and you will see that he will be teaching or taking the role of a teacher. In this sense, nothing is given and everything has to be produced and sustained if it is to form a part of our experience.

4. The teacher, then, indicates that they are involved in a teaching situation by taking control of the introduction of the topic, and she also shows that she

intends to keep control, for there is to be, 'you people and me'(p.1: 02). Her words are used to describe a typical lesson and the children will find them familiar.

5. However, this opening statement also serves to demonstrate the kind of teaching situation they are to engage in and present. The teacher's use of the word 'natter' helps to describe the way in which those involved are to contribute as well as pointing to the relationship that will exist between the teacher and the pupils on this occasion. In the same way, when she says 'we're', and qualifies it with 'you people and me', she is pointing to a particular form of teaching engagement (4). She is 'setting the scene' even as she demonstrates her role and her relationship with the pupils. Once again the children will find it familiar and should know what to do in order that they might be seen as pupils. Indeed, they could remember her words with great clarity afterwards and said, 'She told us we were going to have a natter'. They understand what she is doing and they know well what class discussions are, for they have been this way before(5).

6. We could, for instance, compare this teacher's opening statement with these fictitious yet familiar openings:

'Now what I'm going to talk about today is...', or

'We are going to do some writing now.' (meaning, of course, that you - the pupils - will be doing the writing, whilst I - the teacher - will set you going,

keep you at it, and then evaluate what you have done),  
or even,

'I'm waiting'.

These are not simply opening statements which make sense within teaching situations. They are the teaching situations, and they work to demonstrate the unequal distribution of 'rights' in the teacher's favour which are a feature of teaching situations and which help to characterise them(6). Each one of these 'opening sentences' serves to indicate, in general terms, the relationship between the teachers and the pupils, and the kind of contribution that each may (or may not) make. They also point to the way in which the subject matter is to be handled. This is the sort of information they carry, and it is immediately available to the children(7).

7. At this stage, these 'teachers' are not concerned with the topic of the lesson, except in so far as they are claiming the right to introduce it and say what it should be, for their interest is in demonstrating the kind of situation the children are to engage in. There are no words here that do not, in some way, describe the context within which they are spoken, and none that do not seem sensible within that context. They all work as opening sentences in teaching situations, and we find them as familiar as any pupil would.

#### 'GOOD' LESSONS.

8. Whether or not a lesson is considered a 'good

lesson' may depend upon whether it is a 'good lesson' of its kind, and whether those involved are able to take part properly (which means contributing appropriately to a situation which appears familiar). It may have rather less to do with anything that is actually learned and it could be significant that in this case, at any rate, the teacher goes on to deal with the topic only after the teaching situation has been established. Indeed, in this kind of interaction (a teacher/pupil discussion) it could be more important (from the teacher's point of view) that the pupils take part effectively rather than that they should increase their knowledge of, say, volcanoes(8). It came as no surprise when the teacher learned afterwards that the children felt they knew no more about volcanoes as a result of their discussion. Indeed, it quickly becomes apparent, as the transcript is looked at carefully, that knowledge of volcanoes is not, of itself, sufficient to enable a child to contribute usefully to a discussion about volcanoes. We shall see, as we look more closely at what is done by those involved, that if pupils' contributions are to be treated with respect by the teacher, then they are bound to present their knowledge in a way that makes sense of, and illuminates, the teaching situation.

9. Frederick Erickson(9) makes a very useful distinction between the academic and the social aspects of the task structure of lessons as learning environments. He demonstrates how



'teachers and students engaged in doing a lesson [draw upon] two sets of procedural knowledge simultaneously'.

He calls these, knowledge of the 'academic task structure' and knowledge of the 'social participation structure'. The first can be thought of as

'a patterned set of constraints provided by the logic of sequencing in the subject-matter content of the lesson',

and the second as

'a patterned set of constraints on the allocation of interactional rights and obligations of various members of the interacting group'.

10. So, in a simple form, there is the knowledge which is taught and understood (or not understood), and then the knowledge required to take part in a teaching situation. There are those things which we must say and do in order to engage in, say, 'history studies' (and they are aspects of the subject itself), and there is the way we have to talk and act if we are to be seen as teachers and pupils doing 'history studies'. This is the same kind of distinction that was made between 'school knowledge' and the 'stock of knowledge at hand' in the previous chapter(10), and both are aspects of a teaching situation.

11. However, whereas our experience of academic disciplines, and with that which counts as subject knowledge, may change as our learning develops and as we move from, say, history to physics, exchanging one set of procedures for validating statements for another, the 'stock of knowledge at hand' whereby we demonstrate our

involvement in a teaching situation can easily become tired and worn; a set of repetitive procedures (based, for instance, upon the 'three part exchange': teacher initiation, pupil response, teacher evaluation, etc.) giving little variety and almost no opportunity for development. It may serve only to demonstrate the power invested in the teacher within a teaching situation, and that can do nobody any good.

12. Furthermore, the two kinds of knowledge and the two aspects of the teaching situation may be absolutely disconnected, and though they may be attended to simultaneously, they may be in no way related. We can be seen as 'teaching' whilst nothing is taught (in terms, that is, of the 'academic task structure'; think of 'I'm waiting', for example), and it is not the case that in every physics lesson the rules of physics are treated as an aspect of the lesson itself. It is this sense of discontinuity between the two aspects, the two kinds of knowledge, which is apparent in our assumption that we can teach teachers after we have given them a subject to teach. It is this that lies behind the question, 'What do you teach?', and behind the response, 'I teach history'.

13. From this we may see that we cannot teach or present ourselves as pupils unless we contribute properly to the 'social participation structure' which, in this case, is 'seen' as a teaching situation. On the other hand, it is quite possible to present 'teaching

situations', peopled by teachers and pupils, in which no learning is going on. We can attend to the 'social participation structure' and leave the 'academic task structure' unattended (as, for instance, in the opening statement to this example of teacher/pupil discussion where we would probably feel that the lesson has begun even though there is no topic to discuss). Whether, whilst accounting to ourselves and each other for what is going on, we can also develop our knowledge and understanding beyond that of being teachers and pupils, depends upon the kind of knowledge we are dealing with and the relationship which exists between Erickson's two structures. It seems likely, though, that in many cases the business of presenting the experience of teachers and pupils is disconnected absolutely from the kinds of things which are taught(11).

14. If we look again at the transcript we may see how this teacher and these pupils set about the business of introducing and managing a situation which they find familiar and meaningful. It is all rather more complicated than at first appeared.

01 Teacher. Now what we're going to natter about  
 02 is....you people and me.  
 03 Shirley. (Oh.  
 04 Peter. (Oh no.  
 05 Teacher. And...there's a volcano....right? And  
 06 we live near it...and that's all...mmm.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 1)

15. When lines 5 and 6 of the transcript are taken into consideration, we may feel inclined to revise the interpretation we put upon the teacher's opening words.

Clearly she is now giving some character to the topic of the discussion, but it is far from clear how wide this topic may be and how she expects it to be handled. For instance, the topic (which we may think of as the 'academic task structure') may now be seen as,

'....you people and me.

and a volcano we live near' (p.1: 2-6). In this

case, 'you people and me' has become a part of the

'academic task structure', that which is to be

discussed. Alternatively, we may treat (as we did

earlier) 'you people and me' as being rooted in the

'social participation structure' and elaborating the

teacher's use of 'we're'. Then the topic (about which

we are going to natter) becomes simply volcanoes.

Clearly these opening statements can be taken in

different ways, and the way in which they are taken may

affect considerably the kind of contribution each person

makes and the way their contributions are received.

Indeed, there are other ways in which these opening

lines may be taken. Does the teacher intend, as we were

first inclined to think, that the teaching situation

should take the form of a discussion ('Now what we're

going to natter about is....') or does she see the

discussion as some kind of preparation for another

activity, a piece of creative writing, perhaps, or some

drama? She might be saying, for instance,

'there's a volcano....right? And

we live near it..' (p.1: 5-6), and suggesting

that before we can sensibly 'live near it' we need to

think what it would be like to live near it. Of course we know, with our knowledge of the background to the discussion (see the introduction to the transcript in Volume Two) that the teacher had no such intention, but the children, hanging upon her every word, do not share this knowledge and have only her words for the way in which they are to respond. And surely we must see that the words, 'And we live near it', are entirely free from ambiguity and indicate that the children will be expected at some stage to engage directly with the topic and not keep it at 'arm's length' in the form of a discussion about volcanoes. We may see that although the teacher intended a discussion, she is not talking in a way that clearly indicates 'discussion', and there is room for the children to make different interpretations about the way in which they are to deal with the topic.

16. There is yet another way in which we may interpret these opening remarks by the teacher. It is possible that even here, and intuitively as it were, the teacher is drawing together the 'social participation structure' ('you people and me' about the business of creating a discussion) and the 'academic task structure' (life by volcanoes), and endeavouring to present a situation which may be seen and described as 'we're having a natter as we live by, and sit beneath, the volcano'. It is as if she were trying to give life and meaning to the discussion by taking it out of the classroom and resetting it amongst the volcanoes, the topic of their

talk. The children would then be 'discussing in their drama'. As it happens, they do come to do this, and though the teacher clearly had no such intentions at the start, it could, nevertheless, be argued that this outcome was due to the way in which she got the discussion going, the way in which she used words and the way in which those words were taken(12).

17. When we look at opening remarks like this we are likely to see the futility of trying to say what we are about before we are about it; saying, for instance, what a situation will be before we have set about the business of making it visible. When we attempt to do this, we speak as if there were some kind of model for every activity (a model for 'teachers and pupils discussing what it would be like if...', for example) and that all we have to do (as teachers) is indicate what we want, in order that the children may join with us in recreating it. However, experience does not come with labels attached in this way. The words that we use (and this includes any introductions we attempt to attach to our teaching) are in, as well as being about, the situation they serve to illuminate, and we cannot, as it were, prepare the way before we start. We cannot speak without being involved; our words and contributions commit us, our actions too. We cannot direct things from without and remain unscathed. When the teacher goes on to ask questions and deal with answers, we can see what she is doing in spite of all

that she has said about what she intends doing. To understand what is going on we need to direct our attention (either as observers or participants) to the way in which the situation is handled, the way in which it is managed and presented. We should not try to seek out some mysterious and shadowy intention lurking behind, and described through, our words and actions. There may be no more but the situation as it is created by those involved.

05 Teacher. And...there's a volcano....right? And  
 06 we live near it...and that's all...mmm.  
 07 Have a little think.  
 08 Anyone got any ideas?  
 09 [4 second pause]  
 10 Peter. Africa?  
 11 [some small sniggers here]  
 12 Teacher. We could be in Africa because there  
 13 are volcanoes there, mmm.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 1)

18. Having 'set the scene' and introduced the topic the teacher tells the pupils to 'Have a little think' (p.1: 07). She then goes on to ask if 'Anyone has got any ideas'(p.1: 08). She appears to be asking for information that will elaborate the 'academic task structure' and, of course, she is, but she is also demonstrating how this information should be presented. These statements serve to indicate the kind of approach the children will be required to adopt as they point to a situation in which people wonder about an event and consider what it would be like 'if such were the case'.

19. At this moment, as she tells them to have a little think, the situation is (for the teacher and the pupils)

fraught with anxiety and misgiving. They are all concerned to 'get things going', to get beyond the awkward hiatus which seems to gape between one experience, as it were, and the next. Because of this pressure, which the teacher feels acutely, she gives the pupils no time to think before she asks if anyone has got any ideas. Just now the quality of the ideas and their relevance to the 'academic task structure' are not, for the teacher, as important as the presence of ideas, for it is this that will be used to illuminate the 'social participation structure' which must be illuminated if a teaching situation is to be seen and sustained.

20. The pause which follows lasts for some four seconds and no one feels comfortable. The teacher later said that at this point she was 'very anxious' and the children described themselves as being 'nervous, frightened and scared'. Ian was still wondering 'what was happening' and Mark was trying to decide whether he would 'have to write about it'. They appear to be getting nowhere; they are neither teachers nor pupils and they demonstrate their unease through the long pause. They are uncommitted for they are unsure how to commit themselves; they do not know what to say and they do not know how to say it. So they say nothing and nothing happens, nothing takes place.

21. Then Peter tries a favourite trick of pupils, a strategy designed to keep the experience of teachers and



pupils visible. This consists of the use of a single word or phrase, very general in character and presented tentatively with a questioning intonation. He means 'do you mean this?', and he says 'Africa?' (p.1: 10). Now it is important to appreciate that he is not simply providing an answer to a teacher's question. Indeed, no question to which the word 'Africa' would be an adequate response has yet been put. What he seems to be doing is 'filling a gap' by keeping the experience of teachers and pupils going (characterised in this instance by teacher initiation, pupil response and teacher evaluation of that response; see lines 8-13). At the same time, he is trying to draw from the teacher more information about the kind of situation in which they are engaged. He does this as he attends to her contribution, her response to his 'Africa'. He gives the teacher something to work upon.

22. It would help to remind ourselves of the way in which the situation develops here.

07 Teacher. Have a little think.  
 08           Anyone got any ideas?  
 09                       [4 second pause]  
 10 Peter.    Africa?  
 11                       [some small sniggers here]  
 12 Teacher.  We could be in Africa because there  
 13           are volcanoes there, mmm.  
 14 Ian.       In South America there are a lot there.  
 15           (there.  
 16 Mark.      (Can you tell us \*\*\*\*\*/  
 17 Teacher.  Are there?  
 18 Ian.       Especially near the volcano....mmm...  
 19           there....North America, near the...um...  
 20           I think it's the Grand Canyon...there's  
 21           one near there.  
 22 Peter.     Yes.  
 23 Teacher.  Ah, that's been in the news lately,  
 24           hasn't it?

25 Ian. (Mmm.  
 26 Mark. (Mmm.  
 27 Peter. Mrs Hayes...I think it's..um..been an  
 28 eruption.  
 29 Teacher. Yes...yes.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 1)

23. The other children snigger a bit after Peter says 'Africa'. This is partly, it would appear, as the tension is relieved by Peter's contribution, and the fact that 'life' is underway once again. However, it may also be a means by which they distance themselves from what he says until they find out whether it is acceptable or not. They are all trying to work out the kind of situation they are in, and they do not want to commit themselves too early.

24. The teacher, though, is so concerned to get the discussion underway that she would, it seems, have accepted almost anything at this point, and the word 'Africa' is more than sufficient for her to connect his contribution to the 'academic task structure' and allow it to illuminate the 'social participation structure'. Peter presents her with an idea suitably vague (both the presentation and content) for her to use, and in using it she shows them how she uses it. As she does this, she shows them more clearly where they are and what is expected of them. So, 'We could be in Africa because there are volcanoes there'(p.1: 12), puts the children firmly in touch with the topic (places with volcanoes) and points to the nature of the discussion itself as a particular kind of social activity and one that, in this case, involves conjecture about hypothetical situations

('We could be...'). She tells them how to contribute properly by showing them how to contribute properly(13).

25. All of this work becomes apparent as soon as we decline to take the situation for granted and ask instead; how is that these people go about the business of presenting experience in such a way that it appears real? That is all that we are doing, and yet it puts us in touch with the methods and practices by which we present to each other a social world that is apparently shared in common.

26. In the early stages of a developing situation like this, there seems to be a general willingness to accept contributions if at all possible, and this teacher is clearly concerned to give the children's words validity (14). Another example of the teacher working in this way occurs in lines 23 and 24:

'Ah, that's been in the news lately, hasn't it?'. By making it 'real' (a reportable fact, that was 'in the news'), the teacher gives credence to a very unlikely and tentative contribution concerning South America, North America and the Grand Canyon. She makes no attempt to sort out the muddle in Ian's mind, the half formed connections and the obvious errors, and the fact that what he says has very little to do with the news item to which she refers (another eruption of Mount St.Helens, I believe), seems to be of no significance. What does appear to be important, is that Ian has taken account of her response to Peter's 'Africa', so that his contribution seems to 'fit' the

developing situation. In this sense it was made properly. Further, it could be used by the teacher to elaborate the setting and provide a sense of shared understanding and agreement, a feeling that they could fare forward together.

27. The teacher can just begin to feel, now, that the discussion is underway ('Mmm...Mmm' and 'Yes...yes' lines 25, 26 and 29, all on page 1). Indeed, if we glance a little ahead in the transcript, we can see how eager the children are to show that they can contribute properly by taking account of the two 'structures',

09 Peter. Probably hear....(sparks  
10 Shirley. (Probably hear a lot of  
11 stuff/  
12 Mark. Probably be quite hot.  
(Extract from the transcript, page 2).

Each statement serves to present the 'academic task structure' (the 'sparks', the 'noise' and the 'heat') and the 'social participation structure' (pupil response in the hypothetical form, 'probably'). These children are contributing to the situation and demonstrating their understanding of it as they do so. Here are all the signs of a group discovering what they can do in a situation and setting about the business of characterising the situation by what they do. All are now actively involved in presenting 'teachers and pupils having a discussion about volcanoes and what it would be like to live by them'. We can 'see' it in their words and in the manner through which they speak. It seems as if we might have a good lesson on our hands.

MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS.

01 Ian. I used to live near there.  
 02 Teacher. Did you? You lived abroad did you? Mmm,  
 03 didn't know that. I wonder what it would  
 04 be like to live near a volcano?  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 2)

29. Just as they feel the discussion may be taking shape, Ian says, 'I used to live near there'(p.2: 01). The teacher's reaction is interesting. Her immediate response ('Did you?' p.2: 02) is said very quickly and with much force, as one who discovers with pleasant surprise that by some lucky chance there is a person in the group who can contribute out of their own knowledge and experience. However, this quick and positive reaction is followed at once by a kind of proving, or testing, question which forces Ian to consider the implications of what he has said; 'You lived abroad did you?'(p.2: 02). When Ian indicates, by some sound or gesture beyond the transcript, that he did live abroad she becomes dismissive, 'Mmm, didn't know that'(p.2: 02-03), and continues the discussion as though his contribution was of no consequence(15).

'I wonder what it would  
 be like to live near a volcano?' (p.2: 03-04).

30. Clearly his information and experience is important in terms of the 'academic task structure', yet the teacher seems to be refusing to accept it. Why did she not ask Ian, for instance, to 'tell us what it's like living near a volcano'? Why, instead, did she turn away from him and 'wonder' with the others, 'what it would be like to live near a volcano'? For some reason

she treats Ian's contribution as though it were tainted. Lines 1 and 3 simply do not connect, and her response to Ian's statement seems inappropriate. It is as if these two contributions belonged to different conversations, different experiences and situations.

31. Of course, it could be that she believes Ian's claim to have lived abroad is a false one and that all he has to say, therefore, about volcano dwelling of doubtful validity. However, this does not appear to be the case, for in discussion afterwards, the teacher said that at this point she did not doubt that he had lived abroad. Even if he was simply 'making it up', this would hardly serve to explain why she ignored his contribution for she had not expected any of the children to have direct experience of 'by volcano' dwelling. Indeed, she was asking all of them, through their contributions to the discussion, to use their imaginations and think about what it would be like. The whole essence of the situation was that they 'make it up' and wonder about the implications of an experience they had never enjoyed.

32. Yet still, instead of welcoming Ian's experience she seemed to see it as some kind of threat to the discussion (even the children sensed this, and Beverley said later that she did not think she sounded convinced - even though at this time, as we have seen, the teacher was convinced). Of course, in other circumstances, the 'threat' to the teacher might have been in Ian knowing

too much about the subject and, therefore, being in a position to challenge the control the teacher enjoys over the teaching situation. However, I do not believe this to be the case here. After all, the teacher had already pointed to the informality of the context, the opportunity it provided to have 'a natter', and she had clearly indicated her willingness to encourage contributions from them. Furthermore, the prime concern of the teacher (at least in these early stages of the discussion) was that the teaching situation should become established. She was likely, therefore, to do everything in her power 'to make sense of' each contribution and use it to point the nature of the experience. By this means she could help everyone to contribute effectively to its management. One could expect that any information connected with volcanoes would be gratefully received (as, indeed, it had been up to this point).

33. However, it is not enough for a contribution to connect with the topic of the discussion, with the 'academic task structure'. To be acceptable it must also serve to illuminate and make sense of the situation that the teacher and her pupils are concerned to create through their talk and actions. It must connect with the 'social participation structure' and contribute, in this case, to the discussion as it is a discussion about things beyond their immediate experience. If a contribution fails to indicate correctly the kind of

situation within which it is supposed to work, then it is likely to be rejected and treated as inadequate.

This is what happened to Ian(16).

34. It is important to appreciate that the teacher is not looking here for a demonstration of knowledge, but rather for evidence of a 'wondering attitude' as the children go about the business of presenting a discussion based upon what they think it would be like to live by a volcano. Within these terms, Ian's contribution feels wrong. It is inappropriate. It is as if he misunderstands the kind of situation they are engaged in producing. When this happens contributions may seem to have no meaning though they may connect closely with the topic of the discussion. This is a fascinating example, for it shows a person in possession of the necessary knowledge yet unable to connect with the situation within which he is required to present that knowledge. It is rather more usual, I would suggest, to find pupils thoroughly 'at home' in the teaching situation yet unable to draw from it any implications for what they are supposed to be learning. Generally this is not surprising, for in many teaching situations the topic exists independently of the context within which it is studied. In this instance, though, the teacher is concerned with the business of managing the discussion and she is not so interested in the topic of that discussion. The activity is an end in itself, and the learning centres upon ways of contributing



properly to discussions. In a sense, any learning about volcanoes will be incidental.

35. It seems that Ian has made a mistake about the way in which the situation is being managed. It seems as if he might have responded to the teacher's early 'scene setting' ('...there's a volcano....right? And we live near it..' p.1: 05-06) by becoming a 'by-volcano' dwelling person and so presenting the experience dramatically. Clearly that would be a reasonable interpretation of her words at the time, but he is not marking the developing context. It might be, as one of his teachers has said, that he is given to 'romancing' and finds it difficult to distinguish between the real world and that of his imagination. Whatever the explanation, he mishandles the situation, has many of his contributions discounted, and suffers grievously for it. As he said later when talking with me, 'I was just trying to find out what was going on'.

36. Not unnaturally this kind of uncertainty about the nature of the situation can be disruptive, and it can lead to problems for all concerned.

01 Ian. I used to live near there.  
 02 Teacher. Did you? You lived abroad did you? Mmm,  
 03 didn't know that. I wonder what it would  
 04 be like to live near a volcano?  
 05 Shirley. Mmm.  
 06 Mark. You'd hear \*\*\*\*\* (as well.  
 07 Ian. (Not very nice.  
 08 Teacher. You what?  
 09 Peter. Probably hear....(sparks  
 10 Shirley. (Probably hear a lot of  
 11 stuff/  
 12 Mark. Probably be quite hot.  
 13 Teacher. Yes, (it is.  
 14 Shirley. (Mmm.

15 Ian.           It is.  
                  (Extract from the transcript, page 2)

37. When the teacher asks, for instance, 'what it would be like to live by a volcano'(p.2: 03-04), she is not asking because she does not know, even though she probably does not know. She is not even, in this context, asking to see if the children know, though this is probably what they think she is doing(17). Rather, she is about the business of managing a discussion and trying to get the children to let their minds dwell upon what it would be like to live by a volcano. Ian, though, completely misunderstands the nature of the question because he is not dealing with it in the context of a discussion about a hypothetical situation. When the teacher wonders what it would be like, he thinks she wants to know, and so he tells her ('Not very nice' p.2: 07). When Mark then replies, appropriately ('Probably be quite hot' p.2: 12), it is possible for the teacher to respond out of her superior knowledge by saying, 'Yes, it is'(p.2: 13). It is not appropriate for Ian to say, 'It is'(p.2: 15) and speak as if he had been there, or as if he were involved in a piece of drama or makebelieve.

38. We can see how Ian continues to misunderstand the situation, and the problems that result from this misunderstanding, as we look at the way in which the conversation develops from here. We shall also be concerned to see how the others manage to cope with Ian and his strange contributions.

COPING WITH INADEQUATE CONTRIBUTIONS.

(p.2)

01 Ian. I used to live near there.  
 02 Teacher. Did you? You lived abroad did you? Mmm,  
 03 didn't know that. I wonder what it would  
 04 be like to live near a volcano?  
 05 Shirley. Mmm.  
 06 Mark. You'd hear \*\*\*\*\* (as well.  
 07 Ian. (Not very nice.  
 08 Teacher. You what?  
 09 Peter. Probably hear....(sparks  
 10 Shirley. (Probably hear a lot of  
 11 stuff/  
 12 Mark. Probably be quite hot.  
 13 Teacher. Yes, (it is.'  
 14 Shirley. (Mmm.  
 15 Ian. It is.  
 16 Teacher. And you think you'd hear a lot of noises?  
 17 Mark. Yeah  
 18 Ian. I burned my foot once...nearly burned off  
 19 me toe.  
 20 [A lot of sniggers here, building to  
 21 laughter]  
 22 Teacher. My goodness....how did you do that?  
 23 Ian. Well...a bit of rock out the volcano come  
 24 down. I..I thought it was just a lad  
 25 mucking about and...boyo...when I touched  
 26 it...it..I n-nearly screamed.  
 27 Teacher. Good gracious...it was really hot was it?  
 28 Ian. Mmm.  
 29 Teacher. Do you think that had come out of the  
 (p.3)  
 01 Teacher. centre of the volcano?  
 02 Ian. Yeah. It was about there.  
 03 Teacher. Mmm...mmm. Now that makes you think  
 04 doesn't it?  
 05 Peter. Yeah.  
 06 Teacher. I wonder how the people live?  
 07 Shirley. Yeah.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 2-3)

39. When the teacher says, 'And you think you'd hear a lot of noises?'(p.2: 16), Ian responds with, 'I burned my foot once...nearly burned off me toe.'(p.2: 18). The other children laugh.

40. These two people (Ian and his teacher) are not involved in the same conversation, though they are sitting together and talking about the same things. It is not just because Ian's remark is funny (burning

toes), or because the children think it exaggerated and untrue (though they probably think both of these things) that they laugh at him, but also because Ian has clearly misunderstood the situation and does not seem to know where he is. By failing to contribute in an appropriate way, Ian is threatening the sense of reality that comes as they feel they are involved in a 'shared in common' experience. They cope with the threat that he poses by laughing at him and treating his words as if they were a joke. They discount his contribution, and by so doing preserve the sense of facticity which characterises the teaching experience.

41. At this point the teacher (who feels responsible for the kind of teaching situation that is produced) has a number of courses open to her. She can, for instance, attempt to 'squeeze' Ian out of the discussion until he is able to contribute in a sensible way. Alternatively, she might take his contributions and then reformulate them so that they seem to 'fit' the context the rest of the group are concerned to present. As we shall see(18), she does both of these things during the course of the discussion, but she attempts, first, to deal with Ian by changing the nature of the situation. By shifting the discussion from 'wondering attitudes' to one that concerns itself with direct experience, she manages to accommodate Ian's contribution. So, whilst the children laugh, the teacher says,

'My goodness....how did you do that?' (p.2: 22), and

after Ian explains she says,

'Good gracious...it was really hot was it?' (p.2: 27). Furthermore, she talks in this way after she had decided that Ian was not talking about his own experience but developing some kind of fiction. She has, as it were, joined Ian by contributing properly to the context he was concerned to establish and this enables them to 'keep going' and to keep a 'shared in common' world before them. This is one way of dealing with Ian.

42. However, it is a rather desperate remedy, and though Ian may feel more 'at home' now, the others do not, for they cannot contribute out of their 'experience' and it is their turn to feel uneasy. The teacher seems to have left them. She is not happy either, for she finds her own position threatened. After all, she wanted a particular kind of discussion and as she 'allows' Ian's contributions, so she invalidates much of what she and the others have said. Further, there is nothing the other children can say now and so they stay silent in their bewilderment. There can be no contact outside or beyond our sense of shared experience and no country, as it were, where foreigners might meet. If this teacher is to have a discussion she must demonstrate clearly the nature of that discussion, so that others may see where they are and be in a position to contribute properly. The social experience is not just given to us.

43. The teacher feels that Ian is getting 'out of hand' and so she adopts a second strategy to cope with him. She turns away from him and redefines the situation to meet the expectations of the others whilst yet giving Ian the chance to 'wonder about' his experience. It is a compromise, the outcome of negotiation, for she is allowing Ian to control the topic (his experience of volcanoes) for so long as he presents his knowledge in a way that illuminates the 'social participation structure'. She achieves this by saying,

'Do you think that [Ian's rock] had come out of the centre of the volcano?' (p.2: 29). This is a kind of 'shifting' sentence which tries to accommodate both experiences, and works as a step between the two. Unfortunately, Ian still fails to appreciate what is required of him and his reply remains locked (though rather awkwardly) within the context of direct experience, 'Yeah. It was about there.' (p.3: 02). The teacher then 'challenges' him to contribute properly by 'using' his strange statement to restate the nature of the task,

'Mmm...mmm. Now that makes you think, doesn't it?' (p.3: 03). We are back at the beginning again and we should be reminded of her opening statement and her request that they,

'Have a little think.' (p.4: 07). Once again, the teacher continues as though Ian's experiences had never been voiced. She 'twists' the situation back to a time

before Ian had first threatened it, and she does what we might feel is only possible within a make-believe experience, she wipes the slate and starts again,

'I wonder how the people live?' (p.3: 06). By disregarding Ian's contribution, the teacher shows him that his experience is unacceptable, and this keeps him quiet for a bit.

44. Of course, the teacher cannot deal with Ian as the other children did by laughing at him, anymore than she could, for instance, send him out of the room whilst they continued with their discussion. She has to rely on other strategies to cope with him as he continues to contribute in an inappropriate way. A page or two later in the transcript this extract occurs:

(p.4)

02 Ian. They ha...they had..um..wooden huts so  
 03 when..if it erupted they usually got  
 04 burnt down.  
 05 Teacher. Ah yes...if you...so if you lived there  
 06 (\*\*\*\*\* wooden hut.  
 07 Ian. (Mmm.  
 08 Especially in the Grand Canyon. There's  
 09 a river in the middle of the Grand  
 10 Canyon/  
 11 Teacher. Mmm.  
 12 Ian. and..a couple of people lived in wooden  
 13 huts. And...once the volcano did erupt  
 14 but it didn't come on the news.  
 15 Teacher. No.  
 16 Ian. And it crushed a couple of houses.  
 17 Teacher. Did it?  
 18 What...what crushes the houses then?  
 19 Mark. Rocks.  
 20 Peter. Big stones. (Rocks.  
 21 Ian. (Big boulders....big  
 22 boulders come off 'em.  
 23 Teacher. It would be pretty frightening,  
 24 wouldn't it?  
 25 Several. Mmm.  
 26 Ian. It nearly filled up the Grand Canyon  
 27 once... \*\* was pretty scared.  
 28 Teacher. Mmm. I should think so.

[illegible]

01 Teacher. feel?

(Extract from the transcript, pages 4-5)

45. In lines 2 and 3, Ian speaks out of his experience when he says they have wooden huts and if the volcano erupts they are usually burned down. The teacher then takes this observation and turns it back into the discussion,

'...if you...so if you lived there..' (p.4: 05).

She is, of course, as in the previous example, trying to get him to 'wonder' about his experience, but she is also working as a kind of interpreter, reformulating Ian's words, and his experience, so that they may appear sensible to those acting within another context. In this way Ian's contribution is made accessible to the other children, and it is no longer a threat to the situation. Indeed, by making it work in the context, the teacher is using it to elaborate and reinforce that context. By making inadequate contributions meaningful, the facticity of the social experience is upheld, and that is the concern of everyone involved.

46. However, whilst this strategy involves the others in Ian's experience, he continues apparently unaware of the changes she is making and the work she is doing to make his contributions acceptable. He may be listening but he certainly does not mark her words, and she has to adopt another course to 'draw' him away from his 'world' of direct experience. Ian says,

'And it crushed a couple of houses' (p.4: 16), and



this time the teacher, instead of trying to shift his contribution into the area of conjecture, attempts to draw from it an 'academic term' for the rock which pours from volcanoes. By her use of the 'psuedo' or 'display' type question(19),

'What...what crushes the houses then?' (p.4: 18), she tries to make his contribution acceptable within the situation of teachers and pupils learning about volcanoes. In other words, she attempts to connect it directly with the 'academic task structure' in order to compensate for its inadequacy within the terms of the 'social participation structure'. Unfortunately, this procedure also meets with little success, for it is beyond Ian (or the other children) who, at the moment, are involved either with direct experience or informal discussions; both of which are characterised by 'rocks, big stones [and] big boulders'(p.4: 19), rather than lava. She is forced, once again, to 'make sense of' Ian's contribution by drawing it into the discussion through yet another reformulation,

'It would be pretty frightening, wouldn't it?' (p.4: 23).

47. However, it is very hard to get through to someone working on a different level, and Ian still does not appreciate the kind of situation he is involved in, and is unwilling to generalise in this way. He talks only of his own fear,

'It nearly filled up the Grand Canyon once...  
\*\* was pretty scared.' (p.4: 26). The teacher,

having tried and failed to draw him into the discussion, now moves to a position beyond any kind of experience he could possibly have had. She says,

'How...how do you think the mothers would feel?' (p. 4: 29), and challenges Ian to contribute properly or else keep his peace. He cannot now talk out of his own knowledge, he can only wonder how the mothers might have felt.

48. Ian says nothing. The teacher has not only managed to cope with Ian and the threat he brings with him, she has also managed, for a moment, to shut him out, to stop him from speaking. However, as the situation must be managed from moment to moment and continually sustained, she cannot just leave it there. The pressure has to be kept upon Ian to contribute properly or else keep quiet. She therefore continues with her work of 'distancing the topic' by discouraging the pupils from contributing out of their own experience,

'Have you seen pictures of volcanoes on the television?' (p.5: 08). Her questioning shows them how they are to respond and they will not normally misunderstand this.

(p.5)

18 Teacher. Tch. That's \*\*\*\*\* isn't it?  
 19 [laughter here]  
 20 Ian. \*\*\*\*\* a couple of miles. Once one..em..  
 21 erupted a couple of miles further over..  
 22 ...a dust.. a squirt of em..lava just  
 23 came out of the ground.  
 24 Teacher. Lava...yes.  
 25 Ian. Lava.  
 26 Teacher. Now what does the lava look like? You  
 27 must have seen/

28 Ian. Red.  
 29 Mark. Red (and orange). (p.6)

01 Ian. (And hot..  
 02 [laughter]  
 03 Several. Mmm.  
 04 Ian. That's what I stood on when I was little.  
 05 Teacher. Mmm. And..and and what...what happens  
 06 to it when it is red and hot?  
 07 Ian. Once it burnt a hole about that big  
 08 once/  
 09 Teacher. Mmm. Just a minute.  
 10 Ian. A piece about that big. A hole that big.  
 11 Teacher. Mmm.  
 12 Mark. \*\*\*\*\* chinks in the lava could  
 13 get in and...and you could/  
 14 Teacher. It could, (couldn't it?  
 15 Mark. (\*\*\*\*\* along \*\*\*.  
 16 Teacher. The lava could get in and fill the  
 17 trenches up so (in fact...  
 18 Mark. (Mmm.  
 19 Teacher. ..perhaps it's not a good idea to build  
 20 a trench.  
 21 Several. Mmm.  
 22 Ian. No.  
 23 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\* then it go over the walls.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 5-6)

49. When Ian does speak again (taking his opportunity at line 20 on page 5, just after Julia receives a mild reprimand, and there is some laughter), he is back with his own experiences once more. However, in line 22 he uses the word 'lava'. It was this word which the teacher was looking for earlier (see p.4: 13), and now she does not hesitate to take it whilst continuing to ignore every other aspect of his experience. It is important to appreciate that she is accepting this contribution not only because it elaborates the 'academic task structure' but because being an 'academic' term it also illuminates the 'social participation structure' of teachers and pupils engaged in a discussion. Ian goes on to talk of the dust and

the squirts of lava coming out of the ground which is all interesting and relevant stuff, but it is the one word 'lava' which the teacher picks upon, for that is the word which shows them what they should be doing. It is interesting to see how she rejects Ian's attempts to elaborate upon his experience ('Just a minute.' p.6: 09) whilst readily accepting Mark's contribution, which not only concerns itself with lava but also with those things which could happen (p.6: 12). In other words, Mark's contribution is presented properly. Ian's, on the other hand, remains inadequate; even though it was he who provided the word the teacher was looking for.

50. No wonder he felt bemused.

51. It seems clear, on the evidence of the transcript, that contributions may be treated as inadequate if they connect with the 'academic task structure', but fail to illuminate the 'social participation structure'. Ian knows what he is talking about but he does not know how to talk about it. For this reason he gets rather harsh treatment at the hands of the teacher, and we can see just what this means in practice if we look at the way in which his next contributions are received.

(p.6)

19 Teacher.	..perhaps it's not a good idea to build
20	a trench.
21 Several.	Mmm.
22 Ian.	No.
23 Shirley.	***** then it go over the walls.
24 Ian.	We used to go down the Grand Canyon
25	river...and used to/
26 Teacher.	If you/
27 Ian.	dig their ditches
28	there.

29 Teacher. Mmm. Yeah. (p.7)

01 Ian. And it just came in the ditches.

02 Teacher. If you get em..if you get a bit of

03 warning and you know...well, I wonder

04 how you know that the...volcano is going

05 to erupt?

06 Peter. Hear sounds.

07 Ian. Yeah, well/

08 Teacher. What sort of sounds do (you think?

09 Julia. (Rumbling.

10 Several. Yeah, rumbling...rumbles.

11 Ian. \*\*\*\*\* used to say the/

12 Teacher. Why would you hear rumbles?

13 Shirley. Some little rocks coming down.

14 Teacher. Why/

15 Julia. \*\*\*\*\* down the side.

16 Teacher. So there'd be a lot of noise wouldn't

17 there?

18 Several. Mmm.

19 Ian. We used to/

20 Teacher. And...how would you/

21 Shirley. You'd probably see sparks

22 out...(coming out

23 Teacher. (Mmm.

24 Shirley. of the volcano.

25 Teacher. Mmm. Yeah.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 6-7)

52. Ian makes seven contributions to the discussion during the thirty-five lines of the transcript reproduced above. If we look at the way in which the teacher deals with his contributions, we should be able to see more clearly the kind of treatment he receives. We shall notice, for instance, that four of the seven are cut short by the teacher as she 'counteracts' and draws attention to the kind of discussion she thinks they are engaged in. In each instance she interrupts him, and then speaks as if she were taking part in a discussion about how things would be if 'such and such' were the case. Consider what happens in each of these examples:

(1). Ian. We used to go down to the Grand

- Canyon river...and used to/  
 Teacher. If you/  
 (p.6: 24-26)
- (2). Ian. Yeah, well/  
 Teacher. What sort of sounds do you think?  
 (p.7: 07-08)
- (3). Ian. \*\*\*\*\* used to say the/  
 Teacher. Why would you hear  
 rumbles?  
 (p.7: 11-12)
- (4). Ian. We used to/  
 Teacher. And...how would you/  
 (p.7: 19-20)

53. In every case, the teacher is cutting Ian out of the conversation and, through her interruption, trying to direct it towards the other children who are working as she is and may, therefore, be expected to contribute properly. Her words show them how to do this. Indeed, her very activity serves to reinforce the situation she is concerned to present, for in interrupting Ian she demonstrates that his contributions are not suitable. So, too, does her response in the next example where we can see how she copes with one of the seven contributions simply by ignoring it.

- (5). Ian. And it just came in the ditches.  
 Teacher. If you get em..if you get a bit of  
 warning...  
 (p.7: 01-03)

She shows the children (and us, as outside observers) that Ian's words are 'inappropriate' and, at the same time, indicates the way in which contributions ought to be phrased. By such means are Ian's 'threatening' and unhelpful contributions made to work positively and so help to uphold and reinforce the kind of teaching situation the teacher wants. A sixth contribution needs no response (page 6 line 22), and the seventh earns from

the teacher only the most desultory of comments, 'Mmm. Yeah.'(p.6: 29).

54. In five of these cases the teacher is not only squeezing Ian out of the discussion but also repairing the 'damage' he is doing by shifting things back onto the proper basis, the basis of conjecture with its 'ifs' and 'woulds'. That Ian continues to threaten is something of a nuisance, but the significant point is that the teacher, through activities of this kind, manages to present his contributions as a 'threat' and, thereby, removes their sting. By presenting Ian as one who is out of touch and not to be marked, the 'facticity' of the situation is not only upheld but reinforced, for attention is drawn to just this aspect of the experience in order to present Ian and his contributions as being inadequate(20).

2

55. Imagine the sort of messages Ian must have been getting concerning his ability to contribute sensibly. No wonder he came to doubt his own knowledge and no wonder he was puzzled. Ironically, though, it may be because he was, as it were, 'performing in another room' that he seemed quite untouched by the teacher's censure. It is probably very hard to get through to someone who is working on a different level, for there is really no point of contact. After all, it seems that the teacher was unable to appreciate the value of his contributions, presented, as they were, in a 'strange language'. It may be that this helps to explain why Ian kept going for

so long whilst receiving such little encouragement.

Also, of course, we have to see that the teacher was using Ian's contributions (coping with them and 'making them appropriate') and at no time did she say, for instance, 'just stop talking, now will you Ian'. In other words, she used him to show what she wanted.

56. However, though other difficulties remain, there are signs in the next part of the encounter of a change in Ian's perspective, and we shall see him learning to contribute on a different level and one that is treated as appropriate by the teacher and the other children.

(p.7)

26 Peter. The ground would crack.  
27 Mark. Yeah.  
28 Ian. Houses used to fall in an...it was so  
29 big.

(p.8)

01 Teacher. Mmm.  
02 Ian. Once our car got.....the car was about  
03 that...em pretty big/  
04 [some laughs]  
05 and...just a giant crack opened up and  
06 we were just stuck from one side to the  
07 other.  
08 Teacher. In this crack?  
09 Ian. Yeah. And then it....closed up and we  
10 got...chucked out of it.  
11 Teacher. You had a lucky escape if you ask me.  
12 Ian. Yeah.  
13 Teacher. So....the..ground actually breaks when  
14 there's earth..an eruption/  
15 Shirley. Mmm.  
16 Mark. (Yes  
17 Ian. (But we got out the car...we th..the  
18 car was crushed. It was only about  
19 that big, the car.  
20 Teacher. Mmm.  
21 Ian. After/  
22 Teacher. What....because the earth..the the  
23 rocks came back again, did they?  
24 Mark. Yes/  
25 Several. Mmm.  
26 Peter. That's what they normally do.  
27 Teacher. So there's the volcano..starting to  
28 erupt...you can feel the....vibrations.



29 Peter. Mmm. (p.9)

01 Teacher. And you can hear the sounds/  
02 Several. Mmm/  
03 Teacher. and it's  
04 getting hot...you say.  
05 Ian. (Used to send off/  
06 Some. (Mmm. Yes.  
07 Teacher. And what...what do you  
08 think you did...what do you think  
09 (you'd do?  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 7-9)

57. Whilst Ian was talking (p.8: 02-07) the teacher realised that which she had suspected for some time and saw that he was not simply making it up but drawing upon the Superman movie as the basis for his adventures. This worried her, for now she doubted the validity of his contributions in terms of the 'academic task structure' as well as in the manner through which they were presented. Not only was his knowledge presented in a inappropriate way, it was also knowledge of an inferior sort. Her response,

'You had a lucky escape if you ask me.' (p.8: 11), sounds strained and creaks with double meaning. It is loaded with irony. She then tries very hard to move away from Superman and generalise from Ian's unhappy observation.

'So....the..ground actually breaks when there's earth..an eruption' (p.8: 13), and her fears are voiced through her errors, through her uncertainty and her slip of the tongue. Here is a teacher, presenting herself as a teacher through the methods and practices she uses to present Ian as a difficult pupil. Her 'teacherness' is in the things that she says and does,

so is Ian's 'pupilness', and neither are simply given beforehand. They are engaged with each other, and are 'aspects' of the work done by the other to present a situation which may be seen as 'teachers and pupils'. We might feel that there is no more but that which they say and do, as they try to cope with each other; no more but what is here before us in the transcript.

58. Ian is relentless at this point, and he fares forward with his description of the car being crushed as he takes the teacher's words to elaborate his own experience, refusing to be drawn by her. He either does not see, or does not wish to see, the situation she is working so hard to establish and, once more, a different note creeps in. There are signs of a change in her perspective. Ian's persistence seems to be paying off, for the teacher sounds now as she did at the start. Compare, for instance,

'So there's the volcano..starting to erupt...you can feel the...vibrations.  
And you can hear the sounds...and it's getting hot' (p.8: 27 to p.9: 04), with part of the way in

which the teacher introduced the discussion at the beginning,

'There's a volcano....right? And we live near it.' (p.1: 05). It was this opening 'instruction' that seemed to lead Ian into all the mistakes which he subsequently made, for this is the kind of thing he has been doing all along; describing his experience as if he lived by a volcano. It is almost as though he had been told how to behave before the discussion had started,

and remembering this had closed his mind to the situation developing around him. Because he cannot 'see' the way things are, he cannot contribute properly, to this particular kind of teaching situation. He does, of course, contribute properly to a situation described as, say, 'teacher trying to get a discussion going with a difficult child'; the situation, in fact, which we are examining here. He never, for instance, doubted that this was a teaching situation or was muddled as to who was the teacher and who the pupils.

59. But now things seem to be changing again. The teacher seems to be encouraging the others to 'see' the situation as Ian has seen it,

'...you can feel the....vibrations. And you can hear the sounds...and it's getting hot.. (p.8: 28).

It is as though she were about the business of 'scene building' again, and this time she does seem to be expecting a dramatic response from the children. It is interesting to see how she was drawn into this position as she had to deal with Ian and his 'direct experience'. Look at her responses to Ian's account of his 'experiences',

'In this crack?' (p.8: 08).

'You had a lucky escape if you ask me.' (p.8: 11).

'What....because the earth..the the rocks came back again, did they?' (p.8: 22). In each

case the teacher responded as if he were recounting his experiences. Almost in spite of herself, it seems, she enters into a new situation and one in which Ian feels thoroughly 'at home'. For the first time, Ian and the

teacher are able to converse at some length for they can agree about the kind of situation they are concerned to present. It is the teacher who has changed perspective, though, for Ian is where he has ever been.

60. However, it does not last for long, for the teacher is clearly not prepared to let the discussion move towards drama (partly, as she later explained, because she thought that I wanted to observe a discussion), and so she tries to make his contributions significant in that they work within the context of a hypothetical discussion. This is how she does it,

'And what...what do you think you did...what do you think you'd do?' (p.9: 07). We can see her

change her position in the middle of her contribution. She begins to speak within his context and ends by engaging in her kind of discussion. This is another example of the teacher using an utterance to shift contexts(21). It is one of those 'linking statements' which serve to accommodate disparate points of view, and which give to a situation a sense of unity and stability, a feeling of shared understanding.

Statements such as these help us to see how situations are managed, help us to see how we go about the business of making social experience seem real.

61. We have seen some of the ways in which the teacher manages to 'distance' Ian's experiences so that they can become matters for conjecture. We have seen her reformulate his contributions so that they 'fit' with the situation she is concerned to create. We have seen,

as well, the way in which she 'draws' from his utterances words of academic significance, and we have watched her deliberately introduce statements which are beyond his experience in order to get him to produce a proper response. All of these are examples of situated practices(22), and are strategies whereby people manage to present a situation in such a way that it appears sensible and familiar to those involved. They have ensured that the discussion is kept going, and it is this discussion, and the contributions through which it is made visible, that is their present experience of the social life. Ian may not know exactly where he is, but he knows that he is somewhere and, further, that it is worth his while to try to find out what is going on.

62. However, though all of these strategies have served to keep Ian involved and maintain the 'facticity' of the situation, they have not made him contribute properly. The teacher is bound, therefore, to keep working at it and she does not seem to be short of ideas.

10 Ian. (Sometimes they used to send off air  
 11 raid...air raid si...  
 12 Mark. Sirens/  
 13 Ian. sirens...bit like them.  
 14 Teacher. Yeah, as a warning?  
 15 Ian. Mmm.  
 16 Teacher. Well...(that would be all/  
 17 Peter. (\*\*\*\*\*/  
 18 Teacher. be all right  
 19 now with/  
 20 Ian. 'cause there used to be..(holes/  
 21 Peter. (Comes out/  
 22 Ian. bit like  
 23 em...Peter's but they didn't have...  
 24 didn't have..em..the leaks in 'em...they  
 25 ...it was just the earth and they dug  
 26 a hole and dug under, dug out and...  
 27 went in.

28 Teacher. Ah, so/  
 29 Ian. and shut a metal door so it couldn't  
 (p.10)

01 Ian. ..em..get in. But it melt the door.  
 02 Teacher. (Yes/  
 03 Shirley. (That's what I thought was happening.  
 04 Julia. Mmm.  
 05 Teacher. What do you think it would have been  
 06 like..a hundred years ago or..or more  
 07 than a hundred years ago then...when  
 08 they didn't have things/  
 09 Ian. They would have gone out  
 10 the same but they would have got killed.  
 11 Teacher. Mmm.  
 12 Ian. \*\*\*\*\*.  
 13 Julia. They would go somewhere where they could  
 14 get away from it, I should think.  
 15 Teacher. That's....I think that's what I'd try  
 16 and do, escape..yes.  
 17 Ian. Get up the mountains.  
 18 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\* (or something like that.  
 19 Bev. (Run like mad.  
 20 [laughter]  
 21 Ian. I'd just get a/  
 22 Teacher. Do you think/  
 23 Julia. Try and (get some/  
 24 Teacher. (If you ran/  
 25 Julia. \*\*\*\*\* people.  
 26 Teacher. Sorry?  
 27 Julia. Try and get somewhere with other people  
 28 so you/  
 29 Teacher. Mmm.  
 (p.11)

01 Julia. group together.  
 02 Teacher. Yes...you don't want to be by yourself  
 03 really.  
 04 Shirley. No.  
 05 Teacher. Because it's dangerous if you get  
 06 separated, isn't it?  
 07 Ian. Or (I'd try and get a group...and walk  
 08 into the mountain.  
 09 Teacher. (In a situation like that/  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 9-11)

63. In this extract we can see the teacher using yet another tactic to distance the subject matter (in this case Superman and modern technology) and thereby indicating the kind of situation she feels they should be engaged in creating. Ian talks of 'sirens' (p.9: 10), and she replies,

'Well...that would be all..be all right now  
with/' (p.9: 16), and then, a little later, when he  
has had a chance to develop his topic,

'What do you think it would have been like...a  
hundred years ago then...when they didn't have  
things/' (p.10: 05). Once again she is challenging  
him to contribute properly or else keep quiet; this time  
it works. On the previous occasion that she had  
indicated so pointedly the kind of response that was  
needed, he only kept silent(23). This time he was  
'forced' to respond in an appropriate and proper way,

'They would have gone out the same but they  
would have got killed.' (p.10: 09). Suddenly he  
seems to know where he is and, for the first time, the  
other children talk with him and without the  
intercession of the teacher. For a while, his comments  
are apt and appropriate in terms of the 'social  
participation structure' which the others are busy  
creating,

'[I'd try to] get up the mountains' (p.10: 17)  
'I'd just get a/' (p.10: 21)  
'Or I'd try and get a group...and walk into  
the mountain.' (p.10: 07). Ian is contributing

directly to the developing situation out of his own  
understanding of what is going on. We can see how the  
teacher and the children 'work' to bring this about if  
we consider this short extract,

14 Teacher. Do you think everyone would just run  
15 away in a group sensibly? What might  
16 happen?  
17 Ian. They'd (panic.  
18 Julia. (start panicking/  
19 Teacher. So what happens?  
20 Ian. Thousands of (people would be killed.  
(Extract from the transcript, page 12).

64. Ian is here talking within the context presented by the others. In every sense, he is within their words. They have not told him what to do but they have shown him how to contribute, and they have worked to make his contributions appropriate. Ian appears to have learned; we can see that he is now 'at home', and while it lasts each person will feel that things are right. We can now look at what it means to be seen to contribute successfully to a situation.

#### MAKING SUCCESSFUL CONTRIBUTIONS.

65. It is important to appreciate that all contributions are 'successful' contributions in the sense that they are the stuff of which situations are made. Indeed we are only aware of situations in so far as we are able to make contributions appropriate or else show them to be inappropriate. This is part of the 'meaning making' process and we shall be looking at it again later(24). As we have just seen, Ian's contributions are 'successful' in the sense that they contribute to a situation which may be described as, say, 'teacher trying to get a child to contribute properly to a discussion'. We have no more but that which is before us. Even so, it is easy to see that Ian's contributions are not successful in terms of the kind of situation the others involved are concerned to create. In other words, as long as Ian talks and acts as he does, they (and particularly the teacher) have to work very hard in order to manage the situation and keep





it before their eyes. He is a constant threat to the 'meaningfulness' of the situation. At the moment, they can just about cope, but if his contributions were to become too disruptive they could be forced to adopt more alarming methods to uphold the sense of shared understanding. He could, for instance, be sent back to his classroom. The point is, that for so long as contributions can be made meaningful (made appropriate) they will be acceptable. It is only when they appear wilfully disruptive of the context, or are seen as random interjections, that the person so speaking (as opposed to their contributions) will be treated as inadequate. We may then say they are too young, or not well, or that their minds are elsewhere; perhaps they are strangers. They may even have to be locked away. Of course, we are a long way from this point with Ian, and it is quite easy (and natural) to account for the strange nature of his contributions by saying that he misunderstood what was required of him. If the teacher had thought he was trying to spoil the lesson deliberately, she would have treated him differently.

66. It is interesting to note that Ian manages to respond to the teacher's question in an appropriate way immediately after the teacher had succeeded in conversing with Ian on his own terms(25). It is as if having once made contact they are able to sustain that contact through different contexts. One has an image of the teacher reaching down, as it were, to where Ian is

and drawing him to the level upon which she is working. She is seen, here, to provide a helping hand, collecting him and taking him to where she feels he ought to be. Until this time they had been 'shouting at each other from different rooms', now she has gone to get him. I think this is probably important, for she is taking account of his point of view and helping him to make sense of what he knows. We shall look at this again in Chapter Eight, 'Teaching and Learning in Drama'.

67. For the moment, let us see what Ian has to do in order to contribute properly to a discussion about volcanoes.

(p.13)

06 Ian. I want to try getting up into the  
07 mountains.  
08 Teacher. Why...y-yes...you'd be up in the  
09 mountains if the volcano...\*\*\*\*  
10 around. You might not want to go any  
11 higher.  
12 Ian. We-ll.  
13 Teacher. \*\*\*\*\* you near?  
14 Mark. And if you were near a forest the trees  
15 would....topple over on top of the  
16 houses.  
17 Teacher. Yes, they might.  
18 Julia. Mmm.  
19 Mark. So when you're trying to get out of the  
20 houses you could get toppled on by the  
21 trees.  
22 Julia. Yeah, and/  
23 Teacher. So that's...more danger.  
24 Mark. Mmm.  
25 Julia. Yeah. Mmmm.  
26 Ian. If there's an eruption it can bring a..  
27 tidal wave \*\*\*\* something like that.  
28 Julia. Yeah.  
29 Teacher. Yes.

(p.14)

01 Peter. Or if/  
02 Ian. And then..and then if you are on the  
03 mountain...be much safer.  
04 Teacher. You would indeed.....than if you'd run  
05 down.  
06 Ian. You'd only be about...that much off the

07                   water if you were on the top of the  
08                   mountain....still.  
                    (Extract from the transcript, pages 13-14)

68. We can see how much Ian has learned about the kind of situation he is in if we consider this extract, for when Ian says,

'I want to try getting up into the mountains.' (p. 13: 06), the teacher responds, as she did before, by reformulating his contribution so that it makes sense within the discussion ('You'd be..' and 'You might not', p.13: 08). She then goes on to treat it as inadequate in terms of the 'academic task structure' by saying in effect, 'You'd be up there already so you wouldn't want to go any higher'.

69. Now we may feel that if Ian had met with this sort of reply earlier (as, indeed, he regularly did), he would either have been bewildered by it or else failed to notice it altogether. Indeed, this is what always happened and this is what we have seen(26). However, on this occasion, he considers his position, reformulates the statement himself, and elaborates upon its significance in terms of the subject. He says,

'If there's an eruption it can bring a..tidal wave \*\*\*\* something like that.' (p.13: 26), and a moment later, after receiving encouragement from the teacher to fare forward,

'And then..and then if you are on the mountain... be much safer.' (p.14: 2). His contributions are now seen as adequate on both levels (in terms of both structures) and so they gain the teacher's acceptance,

'You would indeed.....than if you'd run down.' (p. 14: 04). Ian is discovering what he has to do in order to contribute properly, in order to have his knowledge taken seriously and treated as valid,

'You'd only be about...that much off the water if you were on the top of the mountain.... still.' (p.14: 06). He has become attentive to the developing situation, and though he may make mistakes he knows how to put them right.

70. This new found appreciation of the situation does not mean that Ian has simply stepped into their 'world' and left behind all that he was presenting previously. Rather he has discovered how to make his experience meaningful within the context of teachers and pupils discussing what it would be like to live by volcanoes. In this sense, he uses his ability to contribute properly, to redefine the situation by bringing in his own 'experiences'. He manages to achieve this by presenting them correctly and by justifying their inclusion. We can see it happening here;

(p.14)

22 Ian. If..if you do fall down a crack you'll  
 23 never get out.  
 24 Shirley. Mmm.  
 25 Ian. 'Cause when our car did go down we never  
 26 found it again.  
 27 Teacher. No.  
 28 Ian. We dug for ages.  
 29 Teacher. Mmm.

(p.15)

01 Ian. We went right down into the earth.  
 02 Teacher. Was it warm down there?  
 03 Ian. Mmm.  
 04 Teacher. It was getting near the volcano wasn't  
 05 it?  
 06 Ian. So we just piled it back up/  
 07 Teacher. So/  
 08 Ian. and we went

09 back home.  
 10 Teacher. Ah. How did you...how did you dig down  
 11 then to get down there?  
 12 Ian. With a giant drill.  
 13 Teacher. Did you? Mmm.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 14-15)

71. When Ian says, ''cause when our car did go down we never found it again'(p.14: 25), we might feel that he is back in the old way talking about his experience; and, of course, he is. However, there is a difference, for whereas on most of the previous occasions the teacher had either rejected, ignored or, at least, reformulated such statements, this time she seems to find it acceptable. She responds directly to it, and even continues to question him about his fictitious experiences,

'Was it warm down there?' (p.15: 02)  
 'It was getting near the volcano, wasn't it?' (p.15: 04)  
 'Ah. How did you...how did you dig down then to get down there?' (p.15: 10)  
 'Did you?' (p.15: 13). It is as if Ian has earned

the right to talk about his 'experiences' by using them properly within the context of the discussion. He gets the teacher's attention by contributing in an appropriate way,

'If..if you do fall down a crack you'll never get out.' (p.14: 22), and then he uses his own experience to support his argument,

'cause when our car did go down we never found it again.' (p.14: 25). This is not the same as simply telling them what it is like to be there. Ian is finding that he can get his way if only he can manage to contribute properly, and that requires him to be

attentive to the situation (in a way which, clearly, he was not at the beginning).

72. Indeed, because Ian contributes in the 'right' way, he is able to secure more than just the teacher's interest and attention, for he also manages to get her to redefine the situation in terms of his 'experience'. This change of perspective on the part of the teacher occurs in this extract,

(p.15)

14 So, we've got....volcanoes and...tidal  
 15 waves and forests falling down on us.  
 16 What are we going to do?  
 17 Ian. And cracks.  
 18 Teacher. Mmm. Yes. What are we going to do then?  
 19 How are we going to escape?  
 20 [silence]  
 21 Bev. Just run away.  
 22 Mark. (Or go by car.  
 23 Ian. (\*\*\*\*\* mountains.  
 24 Shirley. Try and get a vehicle and/  
 25 Peter. Run (for it.  
 26 Shirley. (\*\*\*\*\* away.  
 27 Peter. What about...../  
 28 Ian. The cracks.  
 29 Peter. The cracks?

(p.16)

01 Shirley. Oh aye...might fall down.  
 02 Teacher. Mmm.  
 03 [little laugh]  
 04 Mark. They sent some helicopters when  
 05 St.Helens erupted.  
 06 Teacher. They did.  
 07 Peter. Oh yeah.  
 08 Teacher. Now that's all right now..what if it  
 09 was hundreds of years ago?  
 10 [laughter]  
 11 Julia. Well they/  
 12 Mark. Send a pterodactyl.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 15-16)

73. On this occasion, instead of simply trying to make Ian's contributions accessible to the others through some kind of reformulation, she attempts to draw them into his 'world' by redefining the situation in terms of

his interests. She starts this process with another piece of 'scene setting' such as she used at the beginning and which seemed to lead Ian into so many difficulties(27),

'So, we've got....volcanoes and...tidal waves and forests falling down on us.' (p.15: 14). She

continues to work in this way as she draws the other children into the new context,

'What are we going to do?  
What are we going to do then? How are we going to escape?' (p.15: 16-19). The teacher is

now challenging the children to present the experience dramatically, and as she does so, we can see her taking the discussion out of the classroom and resetting it amongst the volcanoes, the topic of their talk. For a moment, the 'social participation structure' and the 'academic task structure' may be seen as aspects of each other(28). We can see, too, how this change in the situation was managed for when the teacher says,

'What are we going to do? How are we going to escape?' (p.15: 16-19), she is presenting a

different kind of 'reality' from that which they had been busily creating during the discussion about volcano living. It is not the same thing, for instance, as asking,

'What would we do?' or 'How could we escape?', for the form of the question (in this case the teacher's use of tense) serves to define the situation. Because the teacher says, 'What are we going to do?', the situation is changed, and their roles are changed as well(29).

'How are we going to escape?', she asks and is greeted with a silence. This should remind us of a similar gap at the beginning(30) when the teacher completed her introductory 'scene setting' remarks by asking,

'Anyone got any ideas?' (p.1: 08). It is again, a moment of change, a point at which those involved are being asked to contribute in a different way and present another 'reality'. It is a moment which is keenly felt, and when they do speak, their response to the teacher is very interesting. It is almost as if they were back at the beginning again, trying to discover where they are and what is expected of them. Their contributions are deliberately vague and could be expected to work across several different situations. At first glance it would seem that they have successfully 'shifted realities' and are properly responding to the question, 'How are we going to escape?' as if they were 'by volcano' dwelling children;

'Just run away.' (p.15: 21)

'Or go by car.' (p.15: 22)

'Try and get a vehicle.' (p.15: 24)

'Run for it.' (p.15: 25). However, they may, like

Peter at the beginning when he said 'Africa'(31), be much less certain about what is happening than they appear. They may be working within a kind of 'sitting on the fence' or 'wait and see' mode, for these answers would do as well as responses to a question of the form, 'How could we escape?', and they have left the full form of their statements unstated; or rather, they have let



the form of the teacher's question speak for them. They do not, for instance, say 'we could run away' or 'we could try and get a vehicle' and neither do they say, 'let's just run away' or 'let's try and get a vehicle'. Their contributions would be as adequate for a situation described as 'teacher and pupils discussing what it might be like to live by a volcano' as they would for 'people considering their life as they sit talking beneath a volcano'. They are playing the situation thoughtfully and with care, though they will not know how they are playing it(32). They feel there has been a change but they do not know where they are as yet, and whilst they wait for more information they talk in a manner designed to keep the situation (whatever it might be) going, and present themselves as creditable contributors. By this means, they make it possible for the teacher to say more, and through her speech, show them where they ought to be and how they should contribute. We shall see exactly the same kind of procedure being adopted later, as another teacher gets them to do some drama(33).

74. However, just as they seem to be moving into drama, the teacher remembers my request that she have a discussion and we see her, once again, try to wrench the situation in another direction. She draws upon her extra 'rights' in the teaching situation in order to bring it back to the level of a 'conjectural type' discussion and the place where she believes she ought to

be. She does so now, by attempting to distance the action, moving it beyond their immediate experience, and thereby challenging them to 'wonder',

'Now that's all right now..what if it was  
hundreds of years ago?' (p.16: 08). Perhaps it is  
fitting that Mark (who may be unsure of where he is now)  
treats the situation as 'not serious' and expresses his  
feelings by joking;

'Send a pterodactyl.' (p.16: 12). They all laugh.

### BEYOND TEACHERS AND PUPILS.

75. Yet out of this strange muddle comes, for a moment or two, a new level of experience; a level which draws upon aspects of both points of view and yet within which it is hard to 'see' anything of 'teachers and pupils' and the production of 'school lessons'.

(p.16)

13 Julia. \*\*\*\*\* caves or something.  
14 Teacher. [laughs]  
15 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\* mummy then there's the little  
16 baby going along and....they were on  
17 their own and then the....the (\*\*\*\*\*  
18 Teacher. (Mmm.  
19 Peter. They'd be...they'd be the first ones/  
20 Shirley. To die.  
21 Might get pushed or something.  
22 Teacher. Mmm.  
23 Peter. Yeah.  
24 Ian. It's not very nice/  
25 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\* terrible.  
26 Teacher. Mmm.  
27 Ian. If you're going in a car and a great  
28 big crack comes up in front of you.  
29 Teacher. Mmm.

(p.17)

01 Ian. It's all..like on Superman.  
02 Julia. Yeah.  
03 Ian. A car fell down/  
04 Teacher. Aah..I seem to remember that.  
05 Shirley. Panic and..em/  
06 Bev. Oh yeah.  
07 Shirley. \*\*\*\* jump out.

08 Teacher. Mmm. Yes.  
 09 Mark. \*\*\*\*\* couldn't get out.  
 10 Teacher. She couldn't get out could she? No.  
 11 Shirley. She died and....you know she died didn't  
 12 she?  
 13 Teacher. Mmm.  
 14 Ian. Then he tried to reverse the world  
 15 around.  
 16 Shirley. Yeah.  
 17 Mark. [laughs]  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 16-17)

76. At first it seems as though they are discussing a rather dubious topic (the Superman movie), in the right kind of way (as teachers and pupils discussing what it would be like to live by a volcano). However, if we look more closely, we may feel that it is not quite like this. We may come to see that the teacher contributes only occasionally as a teacher (perhaps, 'Aah..I seem to remember that'(p.17: 04), points to her 'teacherness'), and for most of the time her contributions, which are of a minimal nature anyway, do not describe her role as a teacher. The discussion just seems to ride along out of the contributors' shared interest in a common topic, and we feel that the teacher, who until now has had to be extremely active, is simply sitting back and letting it develop as it will. Of course, this is a teaching activity, in itself, but it makes for a very different kind of teaching situation, and one in which the roles of 'teacher' and 'pupil' are much less marked. We have to remind ourselves, though, that nothing has happened to bring this about, beyond the words used by these people in this situation. A new context has been fashioned out of their different perceptions of what is

going on, and it is made visible through their contributions. There is a kind of 'generative force' at work which will serve to move their experience beyond the concerns of each individual. For a few moments, they seem to break the rather narrow and stultifying bounds of a particular teaching situation and forge new meaning out of a common interest presented in a new way(34). For this time they are presenting a different 'reality', perhaps 'adult and children sharing the memory of a film', and it would be difficult to 'see' in this extract any evidence of the teacher and her pupils. This should help us to see how busy we have to be, as teachers and pupils, in order to manage a teaching situation and keep it before our eyes(35).

77. In this short passage, then, the context and the relationships between those involved grow out of their talk, and are no longer imposed from 'without'. They are not reaching for something or trying to recreate a particular kind of lesson. They are just talking and letting their talk point to the situation. The clash in perspectives which we witnessed earlier, came as a result of different ideas about what they were supposed to be doing (a constant threat to all teaching situations) but now they are presenting the social life actively, as the thing itself and not as some kind of recreation. When Ian says,

'It's all...like on Superman.' (p.17: 01), he is no longer contriving to produce a situation (as if in

response to the teacher's 'There's a volcano and we live near it. '), but rather reflecting upon an experience they all can share and to which they all respond. It is presented in a way which 'fits' and characterises the developing situation; indeed, it is an aspect of that situation. They are not working towards something, but finding out where they are as they speak. This is the generative force, that 'inner compulsion', to which all, including the teacher, contribute,

'Aah..I seem to remember that.' (p.17: 04). She gets 'drawn in' and even carried away,

'She couldn't get out could she? No.' (p.17: 10). Out of this involvement (in which the presentation of the social life is part of their interest, part of the 'task structure'), the teacher is able to engage with Shirley at a much deeper level than ever she had managed before,

'She died and....you know she died didn't she?' (p.17: 11). You will have to hear Shirley speak these words to appreciate the point. At the same time, the situation is elaborated to accommodate Ian's contribution which works on a different level,

'Then he tried to reverse the world around.' (p.17: 14). They are now beyond the business of getting a discussion going, for they are simply talking together. They have no end in mind. They are talking without an intention to learn and they have slipped the roles of teacher and pupils(36).

78. It is rather a pity that the teacher 'comes to

herself' once more, and feels constrained to return to the 'teaching', in order to get the 'conjectural type' discussion going again. This next extract, which follows immediately upon the last, shows her doing this;

(p.17)

18 Teacher. Ye-es...well...I don't...I don't know...  
 19 that..that's modern, isn't it? That's  
 20 now.  
 21 Julia. Mmm.  
 22 Ian. Yeah...mmm.  
 23 Teacher. Now we've got..em..poor mothers and  
 24 babies...  
 25 [a little laugh]  
 26 Teacher. hundreds of years ago. The tidal wave  
 27 coming from the shore...  
 28 Peter. Yeah.  
 29 Teacher. Is anyone going to save them, or do you  
 style="text-align: right;">(p.18)

01 think they'll all die?  
 02 Peter. Probably all die.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 17-18)

79. We should find her strategies familiar by now, for she draws upon procedures which have proved successful before. She begins by 'distancing' the topic of their talk as she rejects their present experience,

'Ye-es...well...I don't...I don't know...that..  
 that's modern, isn't it? That's now.' (p.17: 18).

You can see that she is trying to get out of a situation over which, as the teacher, she has lost control, for in talking in this way she is taking to herself those extra 'rights' (which she enjoys as a teacher), and through their presentation re-establishing the 'lesson'. She then brings together two formulations which proved effective before. First, she asks them to consider the 'poor mothers and babies....hundreds of years ago' (p.17: 23-26), and thereby she challenges them to respond properly and wonder what it would be like. She

then makes use of another 'linking' statement which unites two disparate points of view, and works to 'shift' the meaning of the situation,

'Is anyone going to save them, or do you think they'll all die?' (p.17: 29. p.18: 01). The

first part of the contribution links with the 'capsule summary'(37) describing a very present experience,

'Now we've got..em..poor mothers and babies... The tidal wave coming from the shore...' (p.17: 23-27), whilst the second part

indicates a different kind of response. The children know what has happened, and Peter answers in the proper manner,

'Probably all die.' (p.18: 02). It may take Ian a little longer, but very soon the lesson is underway again, with everyone contributing 'properly' and through their contributions making visible a situation which may be described as 'teachers and pupils discussing what it would be like to live by a volcano'.

80. Here is the way in which it is managed,

		(p.18)
29 Ian.	If there was a tidal wave you could go	
		(p.19)
01 Ian.	to the other side of the...island	
02	'cause there won't be....two..the only	
03	one (** up one side/	
04 Teacher.	(Ah, it only comes up one side.	
05 Ian.	and you (** get out the side.	
06 Shirley.	(Could go to the other side.	
07 Teacher.	And then what could you (do then?	
08 Shirley.	(Mark said that/	
09 Ian.	If the boats	
10	aren't wrecked by the storm that..	
11	volcanoes...	
12 Teacher.	Mmm.	
13 Ian.	You're in luck.	
14 Teacher.	You might be able to (sail away.	
15 Shirley.	(Yeah, but while	
16	you're sailing away y...em..might	

17                    catch a \*\*\*\*\*.  
                      (Extract from the transcript, pages 18-19)

This is the kind of discussion the teacher wanted, and everyone (including Ian) knows where they are. It was broken as I stepped in,

                      'Can I just interrupt there a minute?' (p.19: 18).

81. The teacher felt that the discussion had not gone very well. However, that was probably not the right approach to take, for she had been getting a discussion going, showing people where they are and what they have to do if they are to contribute properly. She was unlucky to have Ian to contend with; but it is through Ian's contributions that we are able to see how the discussion worked and how it had to be made to work. He challenged the facticity of the social life whenever he spoke inappropriately, and this may well be why the teacher saw Ian as a threat. It was not just because he persisted in playing the situation 'for real', thereby making it hard for her to get the kind of discussion going that she wanted, but that he threatened the sense of reality, the sense that they were engaged in a 'shared in common' experience. By not taking part properly he undermined their 'world'. He did this as his contributions presented another kind of reality and as they failed to elaborate the situation of 'teachers and pupils having a particular kind of discussion'. He took to himself 'rights' in the situation which, as a pupil, he should not have had, and he did so as he attempted to take control of the kind of knowledge which



was accounted acceptable, and the way in which it should be presented. It was not possible for the teacher to accept this and still be teaching.

82. It is possible, though, for a person to negotiate these extra 'rights' within a situation (and Ian has showed us that it is possible), and we should see from this that these 'rights' are not simply taken by the teacher at the start as a 'badge of office', but have to be continuously presented and displayed within the interaction if she is to be seen and treated as a teacher taking part in a teaching situation. Indeed, it was probably out of Ian's success in presenting another level of reality that I felt prompted to step in and see if we could move the discussion into drama. I did not appreciate this at the time, it just looked like a good opportunity, but it could well have been Ian that made it look like a good opportunity. I certainly had no intention of doing some drama that day, only of watching a discussion.

#### CREATING A SENSE OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING.

83. Before we go on to look at how drama is managed, it would be useful to see something of the way in which a sense of shared understanding is created. We may remember, that from the ethnomethodological point of view, understanding is not the result of shared substantive meaning, but rather the ability to contribute properly(38). We must not think of understanding as simply happening ('then I saw the

light'), but as being the result of hard work and negotiation. It is a matter of being attentive to the developing situation and of being in a position to move onward. We may get some insight into the way in which this sense of understanding is negotiated if we look at two examples taken from the discussion.

(p.3)

06 Teacher. I wonder how the people live?  
 07 Shirley. Yeah.  
 08 Peter. Probably dig trenches...dig deep  
 09 trenches.  
 10 Teacher. What to/  
 11 Ian. There were trenches.  
 12 Teacher. to protect themselves?  
 13 Peter. (Yeah.  
 14 Ian. (Yeah.  
 15 Teacher. Mmm.  
 16 Peter. Dig deep trenches and...when they're  
 17 ...when they have to get out...em..get  
 18 ladders...get some people to get ladders  
 19 and they st...get out.  
 20 Teacher. So if...if you lived there that's what  
 21 you'd do, is it? You'd/  
 22 Peter. Mmm. Yeah.  
 23 Teacher. When? When it's erupting?  
 24 Peter. Yes.  
 25 Teacher. Mmm. What would it be like?  
 26 Peter. Or before.  
 27 Teacher. Yeah.  
 28 Before?  
 29 Peter. Yeah.

(p.4)

01 Teacher. Yeah.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 3-4)

84. This extract enables us to see Peter and the teacher coming to a kind of agreement as they create the feeling that they understand one another. When the teacher says,

'I wonder how the people live?' (p.3: 06), Peter is reminded of something he has seen or heard. So he replies,

'Probably dig deep trenches...dig deep

trenches.' (p.3: 08). His answer is acceptable in terms of the situation the teacher is concerned to create (his use of the word 'probably' is sufficient to achieve this; it acts as a kind of key), and this is enough to validate his contribution even though she does not see what he means. Rather, she accepts what he has to say in 'good faith', because it 'feels right' and illuminates the 'social participation structure'. It does not seem to matter that she cannot connect these 'trenches' with the way that 'by-volcano' dwelling people live. The point is, of course, that Peter knows how to contribute properly, and that is the important step on the way to understanding. As he takes account of the 'social participation structure', the teacher is encouraged to seek more information. She does this by asking a 'real' question,

'What to..to protect themselves?' (p.3: 10-12). She wants to know what he means, of course, but more than that she wants to show him that he is contributing in the right way and has earned her attention. Her concern to connect with his topic encourages him to see that what he has to say is acceptable. It also helps him to feel that she understands what he means. So we may want to say that contributions can be acceptable if they connect with the 'social participation structure' even when, as in this case, they make no obvious sense in terms of the 'academic task structure' or topic. In situations of this kind, the ability to contribute in an

appropriate way may be more important than a knowledge of the topic under discussion. This is probably the lesson that Ian was struggling so painfully to learn, though he did not know it at the time. It is also a lesson which all who contribute to the production of teaching situations have to come to terms with, and it might help us to think about the way in which we go about the business of producing a 'good pupil'.

85. Peter receives from the teacher sufficient encouragement to fare forward, and so he tries to deal more fully with what he means,

'Dig deep trenches and...when they're...when they have to get out...em..get ladders... get some people to get ladders and they st... get out.' (p.3: 16-19). Unfortunately, it still

makes no real sense to the teacher, for she cannot understand the point that he is making. However, it is interesting to see that she does not respond in this way but seems to accept his contribution and, indeed, goes on to reinforce it,

'So if...if you lived there that's what you'd do, is it?' (p.3: 20). She has no idea what that

'that' could be, but she speaks as if she knew just what he meant. All that she is really doing, though, is to connect his contribution to the context of their talk, and she does this through her use of the 'ifs' and 'woulds'. She is laying them before him and giving him time and the opportunity to make use of them and make the connection. For as long as he attends to these it is likely that his contributions will be deemed

acceptable.

86. At the end of this utterance the teacher encourages Ian to say more by challenging him to interrupt her. She gets him to say for her that which she is unable to say for him, even though he imagines she knows what he means as he speaks in this way,

'You'd/' (p.3: 21). When you listen to the taped recording the single word seems to hang in the air as she waits for him to finish what she has begun but cannot complete. It is an invitation to interrupt. He understands what is required of him readily enough (but only in terms of the 'social participation structure') and so he 'interrupts' by showing her that he agrees about the nature of the situation. By so doing he shows her that she has got it 'right' (on the level of topic, that is),

'Mmm. Yeah.' (p.3: 22). They agree about what is happening, though not about the connection between trenches and the places where people live in volcano country. However, it is quite sufficient to keep them going, and the teacher's next 'question',

'When? When it's erupting?' (p.3: 23), is designed not so much for information but rather as an invitation to him to agree with her perception of what he is saying. It shows him that she is trying to make sense of his words, and it works as a kind of confirmation that they are talking about the same thing. It assumes that there will be an affirmative response, it indicates

one; not surprisingly, it gets one. The teacher has taken advantage of her extra 'rights' in the situation to summarise and bring about agreement. Now she is ready to move on,

'Mmm. What would it be like?' (p.3: 25).

87. However, Peter realises that her statement really does not 'fit' with his idea of the topic. It is as if he has been beguiled by the situation, for he sees now that her description does not represent what he meant at all. For him, the trenches were protective shelters to be built before the volcano erupted, and not some kind of channel dug later to divert the lava flow. So he prevents her from going on,

'Or before.' (p.3: 26). He takes care not to contradict her, only to suggest an alternative, and this enables her to agree with him (as he contributes to the discussion) before she appreciates the significance of what he is saying,

'Yeah', and then, 'Before?' (p.3: 27). Once again we may see that this 'Before?' is not so much a request for clarification but an invitation for him to agree with her perception of what he is saying. He knows this, and for Peter (as the pupil), this is probably as far as he can go. He is glad to comply,

'Yeah.' (p.3: 29). Now they are both, apparently, content,

'Yeah.' (p.4: 01).

88. Yet all of this is very strange, for when Peter

says, 'Or before', he does nothing to help the teacher understand what he means on the level of topic. He does do enough, though, to satisfy himself that they are dealing with the same thing, and not enough to make her feel that her perception of the topic no longer applies. They may feel that they understand the point Peter is making differently, but they believe there is a proper point behind his contribution(39). So she can adopt his 'before' and still hold to her own view, and by adopting this 'before' she gives Peter (and herself, and the others) the feeling that they are talking about the same thing. As she said later, 'I tried to make a comment that would satisfy him'.

89. This may be a rather simple and even crude example, but it helps us to see something of the way in which people may work towards a sense of shared understanding in situations of this kind. We may not be able to share a common perspective but at least we may come to feel we are dealing with the same thing.

Indeed, as Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes point out,

'misunderstandings of this kind.....are particularly difficult for the adult to detect, since this would require a substantial shift in their perception of the situation to encompass the child's meaning'(40).

To achieve this shift we manoeuvre ourselves into positions acceptable to both parties in situations which we find familiar. Understanding may be the feeling that we can contribute, that we can 'go on from there', and it may have little to do with people sharing a common

point of view.

90. Let us look at the second example,

(p.11)

07 Ian. Or (I'd try and get a group...and walk  
08 into the mountain.  
09 Teacher. (In a situation like that/  
10 Peter. It's like a Russian rocket.  
11 Julia. If you try running away you might..em..  
12 put your foot somewhere where you wish  
13 you hadn't.  
14 Teacher. Yes.  
15 Peter. Yeah, it's like a Russian rocket.  
16 Julia. Or if you're em/  
17 Shirley. You're scared.  
18 Julia. Yeah.  
19 Teacher. Yes.  
20 Peter. It's like a Russian rocket coming down..  
21 ..to earth.  
22 Teacher. Mmm.  
23 Peter. A Russian satellite.  
24 Ian. I...I/  
25 Teacher. Hey..hey..just a minute, let Pete..  
26 let Peter finish.  
27 Peter. It's like a little Russian rottick....  
28 satellite.  
29 Teacher. Yes...yes.

(p.12)

01 Peter. Coming down to earth.  
02 Teacher. So...what, you mean people getting away  
03 from it?  
04 Peter. Yeah.  
05 Teacher. Mmm.  
06 Peter. But..em..it's come down somewhere in  
07 the Russian area but in the ocean.  
08 Teacher. Yes...so hopefully it won't hurt people?  
09 Peter. No.  
10 Teacher. Em..so..we're there with..with the lava  
11 starting to come out..people getting  
12 frightened.  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 11-12)

91. Peter has an idea, something to contribute,

'It's like a Russian rocket.' (p.11: 10), and he attempts to introduce it. However, the time is not yet ripe, for it seems to connect with nothing and nobody notices. He tries again, only this time he reformulates the statement so that it will connect with the work of Julia and the teacher,



'Yeah, it's like a Russian rocket.' (p.11: 15). Now this does not work either, for the others are not quite done and he must wait for them to finish. So he bides his time and waits for the proper moment, the moment when they agree to understand each other and are satisfied with what they have done, ('Yeah.' and 'Yes.' p.11: 18). Then he tries again,

'It's like a Russian rocket coming down.... to earth.' (p.11: 20), and this time he manages to get the teacher's attention. We can see that he has to work quite hard to make his contribution count and this is part of the managed accomplishment, part of the business of giving to the social life a sense of stability(41).

92. However, though the teacher attends to his words, she fails, as in the previous example, to connect them with her view of the topic. Still, because of the way his idea is introduced (properly within the discussion and in the right form, 'It's like....') she is prepared to take it in 'good faith' and trusts that it will come to make sense(42). Her 'Mmm'(p.11: 22), indicates that he has earned her attention, shows that she accepts what he says (in advance of her understanding) and suggests that he needs to point its significance. He immediately does this by 'tightening up' the meaning,

'A Russian satellite.' (p.11: 23). He trusts that this refinement will be enough to enable the teacher to make the connection between their discussion about the dangers of 'by-volcano' dwelling and an atomic powered

Soviet satellite that had been expected to break up, and which threatened to scatter radio active material about as it came down to the earth. However, it is not enough for the teacher, for she may not share his interest in space events and misses altogether the significance of his contribution. She seems to see his satellite only as some lump of rock that might happen to hit someone.

93. Now they might not agree about what Peter means but they do agree about what he is trying to do, and the teacher is quick to brush aside Ian's attempt to interrupt,

'Hey..hey..just a minute, let Pete..let Peter finish.' (p.11: 25). A contribution like this, designed to check Ian, also serves to encourage Peter. It shows him that he is doing the right thing, only that he needs to go further. Peter attempts to do this and gets into a bit of tangle,

'It's like a little Russian rottick.... satellite.' (p.11: 27), but still, because he is performing properly he gets plenty of encouragement from the teacher,

'Yes...yes.' (p.11: 29), meaning 'You're doing fine on one level but go on and develop what you mean in terms of the topic'. Peter manages to say just enough,

'Coming down to earth.' (p.12: 01), to enable the teacher to connect the satellite with her own view. She achieves this by telling Peter what he means,

'So...what, you mean people getting away from it?' (p.12: 02). This is the tactic she used in the 'trenches' example ('So if...if you lived there..

...' p.3: 20), and in both cases she is telling him what he needs to mean if he is to make sense to her on both levels, both structures. Once again, she invites Peter to agree with her about what is happening and once again she gets that agreement,

'Yeah.' (p.12: 04). He agrees because it was suggested to him that he should agree, because the teacher has made it sound as if they do agree. She has done this by drawing upon her extra 'rights' which enable her to summarise the situation and present it from her own point of view. It is only when Peter looks at what she has said in terms of his idea of the topic that he realises she is probably mistaken. They are not, as it appears to him, yet close enough. His point was not just that people might manage to avoid a 'flying football' falling from the sky, but that large numbers of innocent people would be threatened with destruction if this satellite were to enter the atmosphere above the place where they lived(43). It was on the level of mass burning and terror that he meant to connect the satellite with the volcano, the topic of their discussion,

'But..em..it's come down somewhere in the Russian area but in the ocean.' (p.12: 06). The teacher has to shift her position (and radically, if one compares her previous statement, 'So...what, you mean people getting away from it?'), but she does so without altering her image of the rock-like satellite. She manages to make sense of what he is saying whilst

holding to her perception of the topic,

'Yes...so hopefully it won't hurt people?' (p.12: 08).

94. They seem to concentrate upon those areas where they can agree, those areas which serve to elaborate both points of view. It is this, coupled with their shared appreciation of the kind of situation they are engaged in creating, which helps them to feel they are talking about the same thing,

'No.' (p.12: 09), he answers, and he agrees with her.

95. These people are not talking about the same thing but they feel that they are. They do not realise, of course, that this 'feeling' of a shared experience is an aspect of the work done in managing and sustaining the conversation. The teacher finally deals with Peter's contribution by drawing it into the discussion and making it a part of the situation she is concerned to create. Once again, she delivers a little summary,

'Em..so..we're there with..with the lava starting to come out..people getting frightened.' (p.12: 10). Now Peter knows she

thinks she understands, and he thinks she understands as well. So, though they may not understand one another in any absolute way they are required to feel that they do before they can leave the topic; they cannot, as it were, just wander off. It needs to look right even if they know it is not right, and when it does they can both go forward.

96. The two exchanges we have looked at here follow a

regular pattern as the teacher and the pupil work towards a sense of shared understanding.

97. In the first place, the pupil has to work to gain the teacher's attention, and it has to be done properly. He seems more likely to achieve this by connecting his contribution to the 'social participation structure' rather than to the 'academic task structure'. One only has to think of the problems Ian experienced as a consequence of failing to do this. We may also feel that for so long as the contribution remains appropriate in respect of the situation they are concerned to create (in this case teacher and pupils discussing what it would be like to live by a volcano) then it is likely to continue to command the teacher's attention. In this sense, contributions to lessons have to put the teacher and the pupils in their place and illuminate the 'teaching' situation. This may be a considerable burden to carry around in our work, particularly when this business of illuminating the teaching situation is absolutely divorced from the theme of our teaching. It may even be a burden which overwhelms some of the children for, as we have seen in Ian's case, it is clearly not sufficient to work only in terms of the 'academic task structure'; knowing is not enough, for the knowledge has to be presented in a way that works to sustain the teaching situation and the roles of teachers and pupils. Even Peter, who was clearly much more successful in this regard, had, in the end, to get the

teacher to tell him what he meant in order that he could be seen as contributing properly. His knowledge was validated by the teacher's agreement and, as we have seen, it was acceptable to the teacher in that it worked to illuminate the situation she was concerned to create.

98. So we may feel, that as soon as the teacher is able to connect the pupil's contribution to her own perception of the topic, then she will do so. Further, she may do this in a form which seems to tell the pupil what he needs to mean in order to satisfy her. This kind of formulation is usually accepted by the pupil as he responds to the 'social participation structure' of the situation, but may later need to be modified as he tries to connect it with his own idea of the topic. However, any form of modification that is required is not likely to threaten the teacher's 'understanding' of the pupil's meaning; indeed, it will probably strengthen this by providing something about which both can agree. Finally, coming to this kind of agreement gives to their experience a stability which serves to confirm their belief in the facticity of the social life. The 'natural attitude' is upheld by their work, even as it was 'threatened' by Ian. Nevertheless, and as we shall see, all contributions have to be 'made' appropriate, they do not simply arrive in that state, and a failure to make Peter's ideas appear accessible to the teacher would have 'threatened' the sense of stability just as surely as anything that Ian said(44). Each contribution

has to be coped with and accounted for, if our social life is to appear ordered and real. There is much more at stake than just presenting a discussion.

99. In Chapter Four we shall turn our attention upon the dramatic presentation of experience. In my concern to cast a little more light on the nature of drama it would seem sensible to attend at first to the moment when people move from the everyday to the make-believe presentation of the social life. So we shall look at the second teacher's introduction to the drama which takes place before the drama begins and as he interrupts the discussion. We shall consider the kind of preparation that is required for drama and the 'extra baggage' which people are sometimes expected to take with them as they set off into 'the world of make-believe'. This should encourage us to look at the kind of drama with which this study is primarily concerned and so a distinction will be made between 'doing drama' and 'presenting experience dramatically'. We shall see the 'shift in attitudes' which is required in order to present life dramatically and consider the work of the teacher in role to bring about this shift so that the dramatic context might be developed and elaborated from within. As the drama gets going, we shall consider the means by which the teacher in role tries to discover where the children are (in terms of the 'social participation structure') and the way in which he 'challenges' them to contribute dramatically.

We should also be able to see how those involved (now confident about what is happening) work to demonstrate this confidence to one another, and to display their commitment to the drama.



## Chapter Four.

### GETTING DRAMA GOING.

#### CHANGING TEACHERS AND TEACHING SITUATIONS.

1. We should feel, by now, that there is likely to be more involved in getting drama going than simply saying, 'Now we shall do some drama'. We need only to consider the work required to get a discussion under way, and then think of the 'shift' in attitudes needed to move from presenting the everyday experience (of teachers and pupils) to the make-believe one of adults and children sitting beneath a volcano. It is, of course, what Ian was attempting (against fearful odds) to do, and it is my concern in this chapter to uncover some of the work which has to be done in order to negotiate successfully such a change.

2. The first thing the new teacher has to do is interrupt the discussion and establish himself as a teacher(1). After all, at the time of this discussion he was not working in the school and during its course he remained in a corner and took no active part. The whole context had to be changed and this required him to demonstrate the extra 'rights' he had in the situation if he was to be seen and treated as a teacher. It is quite easy to see how he sets about doing this;

(p.19)

18	Myself.	Can I just interrupt there a minute?
19	Teacher.	Mmm.
20	Myself.	Can you do something for me now?
21	All.	Mmm.
22	Myself.	Em...you know...I've been sitting over
23		there listening to all this and...er...
24		seeing how much you know about volcanoes
25		and things.

26 Several. Mmm.  
27 Myself. Can we just try something now with you  
28 imagining (something..  
29 Ian. (Mmm.  
(p.20)  
01 Myself. For a few moments?  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 19-20)

3. The new teacher (myself) interrupts by moving from his corner, bringing his chair into the group and, at the same time, telling them what he is doing,

'Can I just interrupt there a minute?' (p.19: 18).  
By acting in this way, and telling them that he is interrupting, he manages to indicate the extra 'rights' he is taking to himself in the situation (only imagine how difficult it would be for a pupil to work like this and still be seen as a pupil). Furthermore, he directs this first contribution to the teacher of the discussion and not to the group generally. By this means he points to her position as the person in charge and presents her as the teacher. That she responds positively, 'Mmm.' (p.19: 19), indicates that she accepts her position as teacher (and the one who has the power to make decisions of this kind) and reinforces his position as the person who is legitimately taking over from her. One apparently simple action, accompanied by a few words can be used to achieve a great deal.

4. The new teacher now addresses the others, for his 'teacheriness' must be demonstrated through his relationship with the children, the pupils,

'Can you do something for me now?' (p.19: 20). His words indicate his role as a teacher, and they point to

the children's roles as pupils, as people who will do things for the teacher. He is, in these words, 'living through' his position as the organiser, the one who initiates, and he is asking the others to respond (and by so doing show that they are pupils). He goes on to demonstrate his extra 'rights' as he evaluates their work;

'Em...you know...I've been sitting over there listening to all this and...er...seeing how much you know about volcanoes and things.'  
(p.19: 22-25). Now,

these are typical teaching strategies, 'situated practices' which show that a teacher is at work and which enable those involved with him (and outside observers) to see and treat him as a teacher. At the same time, these strategies directed towards a group of children put them in place as 'pupils'. His words tell them what to do, they show them what is going on. The children miss none of this, and though they will not know how it is happening, they know well enough what is happening, and they know where they are. Their responses (the 'mmms') work on this level, and they are sufficient to encourage the teacher to tell them what he wants them to do.

5. Now, these preliminaries may be more elaborate than is usual, for the 'teacher' is having to establish his role and the teaching situation in rather unusual circumstances. However, no teaching situation can be taken for granted, for each one has to be created and then sustained through the ways in which those involved

talk and act(2). Further, each contribution serves not only to make a particular teaching situation visible, but also, in some measure, to define what, in general terms, counts as a teaching situation. In this sense each act reinforces and then elaborates the 'members'' experience of such situations(3). It is also the way in which our society's understanding of the experience is made manifest. For this kind of 'community knowledge' is not based upon some 'example' which we seek (more or less successfully) to match when we walk into the classroom, but upon countless presentations of teaching situations. So this teacher, struggling to get the lesson underway, is serving not only his immediate interests but contributing, as well, to some kind of 'universal' experience of teaching. He is using this 'general experience' to show how it is done, for each lesson is drawn out of, even as it becomes a part of, the 'lore' of all teaching situations(4).

6. With the agreement of the pupils, the teacher can tell them what he wants them to do,

'Can we just try something now with  
you imagining something..' (p.19: 27). Once again

we can see the teacher setting up the 'social participation structure' before introducing the task. He is now indicating a particular kind of teaching situation and there is plenty of information contained in this statement. He is showing them, for instance, that they will be working together ('Can we...'), and the form of the introduction as a kind of 'questioning

suggestion', seems like a deliberate attempt to 'play down' the 'rights' he has within the teaching situation. Indeed, even whilst he was busy establishing himself as a teacher, and using this form ('Can I..', 'Can you..', 'Can we..') to draw them to his point of view, his words and activities were also serving to blur the 'asymmetries of power' which mark out the teacher from the pupils(5). Of course, this 'blurring' is only visible if account is first taken of the extra 'rights' enjoyed by the teacher. There is also the suggestion that the lesson is not one in which they will be judged in terms of success or failure, for they are 'just [to] try' and with this comes the implication that they may not succeed. Already they will feel that a particular kind of lesson is coming. Finally, by asking them to 'imagine' he is showing the pupils that he values their contribution. This point is reinforced by his positive attempt to show them that he is not introducing the task. Twice he avoids saying what it is that they are to engage their imaginations upon, and twice he shows them that he is doing this ('you are to try something and you are to imagine something'). He completes this section by stressing the informality of the forthcoming business for he suggests that it will only last,

'For a few moments.' (p.20: 01). The children are learning very quickly about the sort of teaching situation they will be required to present, and their agreement prompts the teacher to begin the business of

introducing the drama.

MOVING TOWARDS DRAMA.

01 Teacher. Can you imagine that each of you....are  
 02 a person who lives in a little village  
 03 by a volcano, all right? And I'm a  
 04 stranger and I'm coming to talk to you.  
 05 All right?  
 06 All. Mmm.  
 07 Teacher. Can you do that from this moment? Stop  
 08 being yourselves for a moment, well be  
 09 yourselves....but [laughter] be  
 10 yourselves in this village.  
 11 Ian. Mmm.  
 12 Teacher. All right?  
 13 All. Mmm.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 21)

7. This may be seen as a stage of 'negotiation' and it is set firmly in the everyday world of 'teachers and pupils'. This is our experience of the classroom, in which the teacher (as he is seen as a teacher) has extra 'rights',

'Teacher. All right?

All. Mmm.' (p.21: 05-06). As we have seen already(6), these are not the kind of rights that an 'enlightened' teacher could choose to put aside, for they are part of the business of making 'teaching' a familiar and observable activity (involving such things as 'initiating', 'responding', 'evaluating' and so on). For so long as we can 'see' situations in which there are teachers and pupils, these extra 'rights' will be made apparent by all the parties to the negotiation(7).

8. All that the children get to contribute to these two extracts is their 'mmms', but they remain an important contribution for they serve to indicate that the children are 'in touch' with the situation and that

the teacher should continue talking(8). The children are helping the teacher to sustain a situation in which the relative positions of the teacher and the pupils may be seen by those involved (and by us) as making visible the social experience of 'teaching'. Much of the social life is characterised by the 'rights' given to the various parties to an interaction(9).

9. The teacher asks the children to work directly in the world of make-believe,

'Can you imagine that each of you....are  
a person who lives in a little village  
by a volcano...?' (p.21: 01). This direct approach,

this stepping straight into drama, is interesting for it may be compared with another kind of introduction through which the teacher tries to lead the children towards their imagined 'world' in a more thoughtful and helpful way. Such a teacher might say, for instance, 'I wonder what it would be like to live in a little village by a volcano?', in order that the children may come to 'think around' the topic. It would be a kind of 'preparation' for drama. Drama teachers probably spend quite a lot of their time 'scene painting' and getting things ready in this way. It may not always be very helpful, though.

10. Of course, it could be argued in this case, that the teacher is able to adopt this direct approach because he is interrupting a discussion in which the 'preparatory work' has already been done for him. The children, so it might be said, are ready to get on with

the business of imagining themselves in a make-believe situation, and all that the teacher has to do now is begin. However, a moment's thought should be enough to show us that this can hardly be the case. The discussion which we have witnessed was characterised almost completely by the methods and practices used to create a situation that would be recognisable as a 'discussion between teachers and pupils', and by the strategies adopted by the first teacher to cope with threats to that situation(10). That it did, at times, seem to move towards drama(11) was due to the influence of Ian, who misunderstood the nature of the encounter and so regularly managed to contribute in an inappropriate ('dramatic') way. There was nothing about this discussion which lead directly to drama, though, of course, Ian's activities enabled the teacher to see the possibilities of exploring the topic dramatically. Indeed, it seems likely that discussions in which contributions are considered appropriate in that they elaborate the 'social participation structure' of a 'teacher/pupil discussion' rather than the 'academic task structure' will be of limited use in any drama that is subsequently done(12). It is clear that the teacher's concern to have a discussion, coupled with Ian's frequent threats to the situation, ensured that the main purpose of their talk was to elaborate the social experience of 'teachers and pupils involved in a discussion'. It is surely clear, as well, that



contributions seen as appropriate within the context of a particular classroom discussion (in this case characterised by 'ifs and woulds') would be unacceptable and destructive in the presentation of dramatic experience (unless, of course, it was drama about people discussing in this way). Ian discovered this as he tried to make sense of the situation in which he found himself; as he tried to shift a discussion into drama.

11. Discussions about volcanoes do not lead easily into drama about volcanoes. To feel that they might, may be to misunderstand the nature of the change which takes place as we present social experience dramatically. We are inclined to think, as we talk together, that we are of the world talking about the world, and it is quite natural that we should see drama as just another way of looking at the world, and another way of representing what we see. If, though, we were to treat the everyday social world as a 'managed accomplishment', as an experience which we are bound to present and sustain (and that we do so even as we talk of volcanoes, and could not talk of volcanoes or anything else unless we did), then we may come to see that a discussion devised to present, say, 'teachers and pupils' will not help to make visible the situation of an adult stranger encountering a group of 'by volcano' dwelling children. To do this requires another kind of interaction, and one in which 'teachers' or 'pupils' may play no part. We might as well believe that by

studiously contemplating the nature of water we could come to comprehend ice. If we do not appreciate the nature of the relationship between discussion and drama we can waste much time in discussions which are not only unhelpful but can actually delay the start of the drama and make it more difficult to get going(13). For at some point we have to treat social experience differently, and that is what counts. We have to stop being teachers and pupils and take on other roles, and no amount of splashing about beforehand can prepare us for the 'thrilling regions of thick ribbed ice'(14).

12. It may not be so surprising, therefore, that these children took very little of their discussion about volcanoes into their drama about volcanoes (which, in any case, turned out to be only superficially about volcanoes). However, could we not imagine a discussion in which the emphasis was shifted towards the 'academic task structure' even whilst it continued to elaborate the 'social participation structure'? Would not such a discussion provide a more useful preparation for drama? Could it not be used to introduce the children to elements of the context they would later be asked to deal with dramatically?

13. There are still, it seems to me, some dangers, for when we approach drama in this way we are drawing attention to the 'real' world, the stubborn world of everyday experience by reference to which we feel our fictional world to be meaningful. When we say, for

instance, to a child, 'How would a person who lived by a volcano deal with a stranger?', we are saying in effect that there are real people who live by real volcanoes, real strangers and a real world which they inhabit and within which they meet. We are saying that if the drama is to be good, that world 'out there' has to be re-presented in the work. The 'by volcano' dwelling person already exists in some mysterious way, and now the child is being asked to speak and act for that person. The task for those engaged in drama of this kind is to reproduce, as faithfully as possible, the 'real' world. That, as everyone who has tried knows, is a very difficult thing to do. It is as if the background to their drama existed before the event, and they are now being asked to re-live it. It then becomes the responsibility of the drama teacher to prepare situations or 'sets' within which the children can work and act(15). It is as if the world of make-believe had to be 'conjured up' so that we can then inhabit it, as though we had to imagine what life would be like before we could live it. If we could imagine what it would be like, would there be any point in doing it, any point in acting it out? Could we expect to do justice to our imagination through our acting?(16)

14. As we prepare for drama in this way we are asking the children to 'fit into' a world already established, already peopled; a world that is simply there and taken for granted. It is not likely to work very well, for

they are not of that world, and it is not of their making. Such a performance may be as an ill-fitting coat that belongs to others, a shell empty of meaning, a poor parody of everyday experience. Children asked to work in this way are almost 'bound' to look foolish.

15. It is this kind of approach which leads easily to 'teachers and pupils doing drama', for when we work like this (and it may be that much drama in schools is of this kind), we hold hard to our own identity, through which we feel all the awkwardness and embarrassment. We hold to the everyday experience of 'teachers and pupils' which our 'dramatic' activities serve to elaborate. We busily present ourselves through our drama (as we present ourselves through our discussions), and however wild and strange our imaginings may be, we still manage to keep a firm grip upon ourselves, and take care not to lose touch with the 'real' world. Indeed, the further removed our drama becomes and the more fantastical it appears, then the more solid and prosaic seems our world of everyday experience (for so long, that is, as we manage to show that we are 'doing drama', and not taking things too seriously). This is one of the ways in which the facticity of the social world is upheld even as it is most threatened(17). This kind of drama can be thoughtful, clever, accurate and full of craft. It can also be very disappointing. We take part, but we remain safe and secure in the everyday world, the world within which good and bad actors are made. We take the sting

out of our drama when we show it only to be drama.

#### THE DRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE.

16. It is not our task to present drama. Rather are we there to help in the presentation of a form of life that can range beyond the classroom. This 'dramatic presentation of experience' is not the same activity as 'doing drama', which is something that teachers and pupils (as well as many other people) do. I hope that, in some of our drama, we can reach beyond this, and manage without the presence of the teacher and without the pupil. The distinction I am making here is central to this study, and I shall work to clarify it shortly. It might help, though, if I try first to be more precise about the kind of drama I am concerned to examine.

17. In a sense, this chapter can be seen as two-edged, for it concentrates upon the business of getting into drama and then, by doing so, demonstrates the kind of drama with which this study is overwhelmingly concerned. As I indicated in chapter one, many and various are the activities which come under the heading of drama, and though this study will touch upon several of them, and may have implications for others, it is concerned with that kind of drama which has been described as 'living through' mode(18). It is the 'dramatic presentation of experience', and in Dorothy Heathcote's words the point in our drama at which we agree to 'live at life rate' (19). Drama of this kind looks like everyday life.

18. I shall be concentrating, therefore, upon just one

of the forms available to us as drama teachers, others of which ('projecting', 'depicting', etc.) will be dealt with only in so far as they connect with my main interest. However, though it might be only one form, and one that does not, perhaps, excite the level of interest which it did a few years ago(20), the dramatic presentation of experience must surely be of central concern to all those involved in drama. Indeed, many of the other forms are used in support of this mode, as they may lead into, or else complement, the context(21). At other times they are used as an alternative, as on those occasions when the presentation of experience dramatically may be too demanding. It is not the case that other forms have superseded the 'living through' mode, but rather, that they provide extra activities through which drama teachers and their pupils can look at the nature of experience(22). The quality of this 'living through' mode should be apparent from the taped recording, and from the transcript upon which this study is based. For the moment, I am concerned to point out that it is but one of many dramatic modes in use today.

19. Let me now develop the distinction between 'doing drama' and 'presenting experience dramatically'(23). When teachers and pupils 'do drama', their activities work upon two distinct and usually unrelated levels. On one level they will, through their drama, be illuminating the situation of 'teachers and pupils'. They will be as teachers and pupils doing mathematics or having a

discussion about volcanoes, where the presentation of everyday social experience (in this case teachers and pupils) may be divorced absolutely from the subject of their learning. Similarly, these people 'doing drama' will also be presenting (in their drama) a second level of experience (as they, say, 'storm the gates of Jerusalem'). The point is that few of the activities which elaborate the everyday reality serve, as well, to make visible the business of 'engaging with the infidel'. In such a situation the drama teacher and the pupils remain firmly in the world of the classroom and pretend or play at being crusaders. In so far as this is a 'meaning making' activity, all of the work is directed to the presentation of life in the school hall. The drama is taken 'from life' (say, our historical knowledge of the crusades), and it is acted out in the classroom by pupils for their teacher. This is the view of drama we looked at in chapter one, and through which we are encouraged to feel that drama is an activity over and above the everyday business of living. There is the 'real' world, about which we can apparently do nothing, and then there is the fictional 'world' which we deliberately and consciously create or, rather, re-create(24).

20. However, it need not be like this, for it is quite possible for people to work within the dramatic reality and leave the everyday reality unattended. This does not mean that it will not be recoverable in their work,

for the 'school' is, after all, sufficient an institution to survive a little neglect(25), but it does mean that the meaning making practices and procedures are directed towards making visible the dramatic experience, not simply the drama lesson. For those involved in the dramatic presentation of experience, though, the dramatic reality may be all;

'Attention directed to one feature of a scene often prohibits attention to other features simultaneously'(26).

This suggests that not only does the 'doing of drama' prohibit engagement in the dramatic context but also by presenting experience dramatically we must shift the attention of those involved and create another context. I believe that this ought to be part of our experience of drama, not because it implies greater commitment and sincerity(27), but because only when this happens are we put 'in touch' with the methods and practices by which everyday life is made visible and meaningful. Only then does the drama become a meaning making activity, rather than some kind of representation of the social world by people in the social world(28). Simon Callow makes the point well when he talks of his 'glory' theory of acting;

'That theory postulated that the actor's job was to go on making more and more extraordinary shapes, using a more and more varied palette: the actor as juggler, as magician, but also as weaver of spells and raiser of spirits; the actor as druid, dealing in images and archetypes; the actor as imitator, stealer of faces. What I had ignored, or avoided, was the actor as himself, member of the human race, fellow-sufferer, man in the street'(29).



The distinction is between the children as 'stealers of faces' and the children as 'members of the human race' and it is with the latter that I am most concerned.

21. When the words and actions of those engaged in the drama are a part of, and made 'meaningful' through, the dramatic context, the participants may be said to be 'presenting experience dramatically'. When the drama is being 'put on', though, it becomes an aspect of the everyday experience, and the emotions and feelings presented may then be detached from the dramatic context in which they should have meaning(30). We may feel that when this happens it is rather like the dissonance which can occur between the 'social participation structure' (in this context, the presentation of everyday experience) and the 'academic task structure' (here the 'meaningfulness' of the drama). It is a dissonance which must exist perforce in so many teaching situations because of the nature of the knowledge with which they are concerned(31). It is a shame if it also happens in drama.

22. It is important to appreciate that this is not a distinction between experience and performance in drama. It is quite possible (and desirable) to engage in the dramatic presentation of experience whilst performing before an audience and whilst speaking from a script. It is the difference between labouring with words which will not 'come alive' and being involved in a dynamic event in which the words seem new minted and the

situation has a generative force of its own. At such times all rehearsals are behind us, all the thinking and planning, all the explorations of intention and motive, and we are driven along on an intuitive level, speaking through our character and out of the context; there is then no thought of craft. This 'living through' experience may be just as much a part of theatre as of drama in education, and it is a state to which most actors aspire. It is the point at which the actors (and perhaps, the audience) are engaged in a collaborative sense making activity as opposed to those occasions when the play is thrust at the audience as though it were a finished thing(32). Simon Callow speaks of the dangers of being trapped in a performance, of being locked into the business of 'doing drama';

'An actor who performs in a certain way because the director told him to, is not really there at all. He's in the past, his mind always harking back to the rehearsal room, thinking desperately: "What did he tell me to do now? Oh, god, I'm sure that's wrong," and so on. The performance will never grow, the actor's tension will block off any real expressive vibration because another, irrelevant person has clambered onto the stage between actor and audience: the director. The actor must own his performance, and the director must make sure that he does'(33).

It is this 'owning of performance' which is so important and we have to work to ensure that the children enjoy this experience. There is almost nothing about which professional actors seem to be in such agreement as the desirability of reaching this state in their work. It is the point at which the play comes alive and this 'life' can never be taken for granted and has to be

breathed in anew at each performance(34). There is a sense in which all involved in drama are working towards the same ends, the dramatic presentation of experience. For most of us, the time spent presenting experience in this way is fleeting and the moments lost even as they are gained, yet all of us who have been this way know it to be worth working for.

23. There will be, therefore, the 'everyday presentation of experience', whereby we make our lives meaningful and give to the social world stability and a sense of order. To this we are constantly contributing, even when we do not 'mean' to (such as in our sleep when it is up to others to 'keep us going' and as we dream). There is too, the 'dramatic presentation of experience', which (as it will be my concern to show) is made visible and meaningful through just the same methods and practices by which we create our everyday sense of social reality. It is this kind of dramatic experience that keeps us directly in touch with everyday experience, and in this it may be very important. David Davis makes the point clearly;

'it would seem that this is a unique experiential opportunity in education, different in quality from mainly intellectual identification through discussion alone, or identification through poetry or other forms of literature or media which may create in the student an emotional level but which remains memory-based and contemplative, not active'(35).

The 'doing of drama', though, is an activity which elaborates the 'everyday presentation of experience' for it is locked into that reality; the reality in which

drama is treated as (and shown to be) 'make-believe'.

24. I am aware that it could be misleading using the term 'doing drama' in this way, for it immediately implies that whole areas of drama may be little more than copying exercises. Yet it is just this form of words which is used to take drama beyond our everyday life and make of it something else. Of course, it is something else, but we should appreciate how it is something else. It is something else, because it is treated as 'unreal' in the way that everyday experience is presented as if it were 'real'. We have to uncover the methods and the practices used to achieve this, of which our use of the term 'doing drama' is but one, if we are to see something of the nature of the dramatic activity(36).

25. It will be my concern during the course of the study to show what is involved that people may be seen as 'presenting experience dramatically'. I shall also examine the relationship between this kind of activity and the business of 'presenting everyday experience'. Finally, I shall want to draw attention to some of the implications this has for teaching and learning.

#### MOVING INTO DRAMA.

##### 1. Shifting Attitudes.

26. The move from the everyday to the dramatic presentation of life is managed through a change in attitude, a change in the way in which we treat (and show that we treat) experience. In this sense, we are

not lead into drama or prepared for drama; we step into drama. We choose to treat our experience differently, and one only has to think of young children nipping in and out of dramatic play in order to appreciate this (37).

27. Many of us probably spend too long trying to draw children into the 'world' of make-believe, when all that is needed is a single step, a gentle shove and a change of perspective. This is the point at which we accept Dorothy Heathcote's 'big lie', when we agree

'that we are at this moment living at life rate in an agreed upon place, time and circumstance and are together facing the same problem'(38).

It is not a time for preparation, but a time for commitment.

28. However, because we do not see the everyday world as a 'managed accomplishment', some drama teachers may be inclined to think that the presentation of a make-believe world requires special qualities of creativity and very particular conditions. They feel bound, as drama teachers, to provide the right mood and atmosphere for imaginative work to take place. Children, they seem to think, need help and encouragement in order to be imaginative and so they work hard to produce interesting and stimulating environments within which drama may flourish. I speak with some authority here, for I have been this way before. But the coloured lights and drapes are only rarely part of the situation the children and their teacher are concerned to present in

their drama. Usually they work only to put the drama teacher and his pupils in their place. They draw attention not to the dramatic situation, but to the drama studio, and they show us what the teacher is up to. This 'doing of drama' is a bit like sawing in the woodwork room. It helps to explain what is going on, but it says nothing of the lamp you are making(39). 'Do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus', for activities of this kind point only to the quality of the acting. They do not speak of the situation the actor is concerned to present and they do not elaborate the dramatic context.

29. The world of make-believe is not some mysterious place summoned by bells and a tabor. It might appear fantastical, but it does not have to be so. To present experience dramatically, requires the same methods and practices that are used to present the everyday experience, and to make it meaningful requires that we make it visible, that we remain attentive, and that we contribute in appropriate ways. All of this we shall see, as we analyse the drama recorded on the transcript, and if we work to present dramatic experience in this way (and are free to present it in this way) then our drama may truly come alive and be beholden to nothing in the 'real' world for its meaningfulness. But if we try to 'set scenes up', in the way of an objective world, 'out there' and beyond us, we may take from those involved in the drama the chance to create meaning out

of their talk and action, out of their skills and experience developed through a lifetime of presenting sensible situations and familiar, consistent characters. If drama is to put us in touch with the business of living, it must be allowed to work in the way of life. We cannot just hand out 'meanings' (or characters or situations) for these have to be forged out of the talk and actions of those involved, as they go about the business of presenting a way of life. This is the case, whether it be the everyday or dramatic experience they are concerned to create. It is but a step from one to the other, a shift in attitudes(40).

30. Later, as we look back, we may come to see what we have done, see where we are. That is probably the time for discussion. For the moment, we need to be set going and not told where to go.

'Teacher. Can you imagine that each of you....  
are a person who lives in a little  
village by a volcano, all right?  
And I'm a stranger and I'm coming  
to talk to you. All right?' (p.21: 1-5).

31. This may be all that is necessary to set them on their way, a little background information and a shared context. They know who and where they are, and they know who the teacher is to be(41). They do not need much more, for now it is a matter of getting involved. They had no expectation of doing drama. It was not as if they had walked into a drama hall decked with coloured lights and drapes or been met by a teacher in open necked shirt and pumps. After all, they had

been sitting at a table in the staffroom having a discussion with another teacher about volcanoes when they were interrupted and asked to 'imagine'. It must have been rather like being asked to 'have a little think'(42), and they would not have been surprised by the request and were quite willing to move into the make-believe reality if that was what the teacher wanted them to do. They need very little background or preparation in order to get going.

32. Of course, the children think they are being asked to do some drama about living by volcanoes but it turns out not to be like that at all. The teacher makes use of their background knowledge of volcanoes (which he has already learned from listening to their discussion is rather limited) to explore the relationship that may exist between a group of people and a stranger (and about which he knows they will all have had experience). Initially, though, these things are not in his mind and he adopts the role of a stranger as a device. He does this for two reasons. In the first place, it challenges the children to 'close ranks' and to build around themselves a 'world' about which they can agree. It encourages them to see the need to collaborate in the construction of a 'social reality' which appears consistent, real and meaningful. In this sense, it serves to focus upon them as a group. However, it also serves to put the children in the role of 'experts' which, in turn, forces the teacher (as the stranger) to



ask genuine questions(43). By this means, 'rights' have been shifted away from the teacher in favour of the children, and these 'rights' will be theirs for so long as the dramatic experience is presented. Even so, whilst it puts extra responsibility onto the children (compare the 'rights' the stranger will have now, with those that the teacher demonstrated and enjoyed during the 'stage of negotiation'), it need not mean that the teacher loses control of the situation. After all, he re-allocated the 'rights' in the first place, and he can take them back whenever he wants (in return, of course, for sacrificing the drama). Furthermore, within the drama he still holds extra 'rights' accorded to him as an adult dealing with children (though, as we shall see, these are gradually taken away as the drama develops and the children become priests or take husbands; roles which they make visible by taking to themselves extra 'rights'). Beyond all of this, though, the teacher is able to manipulate the course of the drama (as, indeed, can the children) by working through role and drawing upon certain theatrical conventions. We shall consider these later(44), but for the moment I am concerned to allay the fears of those readers who may feel that my only interest is to set the children going. In fact, we shall see that this teacher is extremely busy throughout the drama. Many would think him over zealous, even a bit meddlesome(45).

33. However, this device soon becomes the thrust of

the drama (the relationship between a group of children and an adult stranger) and it becomes the concern of everyone involved to make this situation plain, both to themselves and to each other. These children have never lived in small villages beneath grumbling volcanoes; that is quite beyond their experience. But they know what it means to 'make a person a stranger', and they know what it means to be part of a group. For, to present situations dramatically, they are drawing not upon their knowledge of volcanoes but upon the 'stock of knowledge at hand', and the methods and practices by which we make the social life visible and meaningful. They are using this knowledge to present a stranger, as they will use it later to present guides, priests and guardians, as they use it in their everyday experience to present teachers and pupils. It is this kind of knowledge which drama develops and refines, and it is not at all the same thing as volcanology. This is the sense in which we are concerned with 'what we know' rather than 'what we do not know'(46).

34. The teacher has now 'told' them that he wants them to do some drama, and he has told them who they are, where they are and what is going on. He now attempts to get them to present experience dramatically, for he does not want them simply to 'do drama',

'Can you do that from this moment? Stop being yourselves for a moment, well be yourselves....but [laughter] be yourselves in this village.' (p.21: 07-10). It might look as

if the teacher is in a bit of a muddle here and not sure

what he wants. It certainly looks confusing, as though he first wanted them to stop being themselves and then, perhaps thinking better of it, decided that they ought to be themselves. In fact, it is through this 'muddle' that we are alerted to what he is trying to do. When he says, 'Stop being yourselves', he is concerned that they should make the 'shift' from being pupils in school to being 'by volcano' dwelling children. He is here telling them to engage in the 'dramatic presentation of experience', rather than the 'everyday presentation of experience'. What appears to be a correction, 'well be yourselves', is really an instruction about the way in which they are to present dramatic experience (as themselves and not in the way of pretending to be real 'by-volcano dwelling' people; old men with funny voices, perhaps). In this sense, he wants them (themselves without their 'pupilness') immersed in the dramatic context; 'be yourselves in this village'. He does not want school children working behind costumes or masks(47). But explaining all of this to junior school children is not easy, so he says what he says, and we may be surprised at how much of his meaning they manage to take(48). If he can produce the social reality of a group of children talking to an adult stranger, then he can expect the language, the actions and the setting, all to come out of this collaboration. Instead of telling them what to do, he shows them how to contribute. We can see him doing this in the following

extract;

14 Teacher. You know, what I can't understand...is,  
 15 being a stranger and not living in a  
 16 place like this little village which  
 17 you live in with that great big volcano  
 18 up there smoking away all day..what  
 19 I can't understand is why you still  
 20 stay here....why do you keep your  
 21 village down here below this great  
 22 volcano?

(Extract from the transcript, page 21)

35. We are now at a stage which may be described as 'stage setting'. The teacher steps straight into role as a stranger, 'what I can't understand is..' (p.21:14), and points out, from within the dramatic context, the salient aspects of the situation: that it is, of course, drama (the immediacy of the language carried in his use of tense, and the sweep of his hand as they look upwards to the volcano); but also the relationship between themselves as a group of children, and between the group and the adult stranger; the background (the village beneath the volcano); the atmosphere (the sense of brooding danger, 'the great volcano smoking away'); the problem ('What I can't understand is...'), and so on. Line 14 is that 'gentle shove' mentioned above(49), the point at which perspectives are changed, the point at which we agree to accept the 'big lie'(50), and it represents a change in attitude as those involved are 'asked' to engage in the dramatic presentation of experience. The 'teacher' is elaborating the situation from within, and giving the children the chance to see where he is, and the nature of the problem with which they have to deal. As we appreciate this, we may also

come to see that the 'academic task structure' (say, dealing with strangers) is an aspect of the 'social participation structure' (presenting strangers). As the teacher shifts the perspective, and steps into role as the stranger, the two structures come together (at least, for the 'teacher' they do, for he has yet to discover the nature of the children's commitment). This is the sense in which he is 'setting the stage' for drama; not only is he introducing the theme of the work, but he is also demonstrating how it should be tackled. He is showing them where they are and what they need to do if they are to contribute properly.

## 2. Checking the Level of Reality.

36. Now he needs to know if the children are with him or stuck still as pupils in the classroom. He cannot simply ask them, of course, for in doing so he would immediately draw attention to the very context he is concerned to leave unmarked (teachers and pupils), and so he must 'test' their commitment through the dramatic context. It is quite easy to see how he does this.

(p.21)

20 Teacher. ....why do you keep your  
 21 village down here below this great  
 22 volcano?  
 23 [four second pause]  
 24 Ian. You get plenty of water.  
 25 Teacher. Water?  
 26 Ian. Hot water.  
 27 Teacher. Can you get hot water from the volcano?  
 28 Ian. Mmm...near....near it/  
 29 Julia. Oh/

(p.22)

01 Teacher. That's useful,  
 02 isn't it?  
 03 Ian. There's water in the ground in some

04 volcanoes.  
 05 Teacher. Oh, I see. So you've got..always got  
 06 hot water whenever you want it?  
 07 Ian. Mmm.  
 08 Teacher. Do you all have hot water in your huts?  
 09 Julia. Yes/  
 10 Shirley. Yes.  
 11 Teacher. All from the volcano?  
 12 Bev. Yes/  
 13 Shirley. (Yes.  
 14 Julia. (Mmm.  
 15 Teacher. Goodness, that's amazing.  
 16 Does it ever go cold or does it always  
 17 stay hot for you?  
 18 Ian. Stays hot.  
 19 Mark. Yes.  
 20 Teacher. Oh, that makes..that makes more sense..  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 21-22)

The teacher has to decide whether he has done enough.

Will the children collaborate in the construction of the make-believe reality, or will they stay as pupils responding to their teacher? It is at moments such this that we can feel the full weight of the years of schooling, of the time spent as teachers and pupils. The four second pause which follows the teacher's introduction (p.21: 23) seems like an awfully long gap. It is as awkward as that experienced at the beginning of the discussion, and which followed the teacher's request that they 'have a little think' before giving her their ideas(51). It is uncomfortable because we are straddled between the two levels of experience. The teacher is already committed, and is 'reaching back' to see if the others will follow. He is trying to show the way, but is unable to get inside their minds to see what they think, and so he is forced to wait until they speak or act that he may find out where they are. He can only wait to see if it will work and he cannot make them

contribute properly(52).

37. When, after the pause, Ian says, 'You get plenty of water'(p.21: 24), the teacher is unable to tell whether he has accepted the make-believe context or is still treating experience as real by providing an answer to a teacher's question. After all, the teacher could have said, 'Why do you think people live by volcanoes?', in order to elicit the response, 'You get plenty of water'. Of course, Ian is taking care to respond in a way that would satisfy both contexts. By this means, he encourages the teacher to say more in the hope that he will learn more about the situation and the kind of contributions that are likely to be appropriate. He is trying that 'favourite trick' of pupils, a single word or phrase, often very general in character and presented tentatively with a questioning intonation, which is designed to keep the situation going until more information is forthcoming(53). This teacher is not so helpful as the teacher of the discussion, though, and instead of using Ian's contribution to show what is required, he simply says, 'Water?'(p.21: 25). The different reaction is probably due to different assumptions about the kinds of situations they are concerned to create. The teacher of the discussion, for instance, could well have assumed that the children would need only a little guidance in order to present a particular, and familiar, kind of teaching situation. This teacher, however, is asking them to present a

situation absolutely disconnected from that of teachers and pupils. He is looking to them for commitment, he is looking to see where they are, and he cannot simply assume they are in role (as the teacher of the discussion might sensibly assume that they are pupils). More significantly, he is asking 'genuine' questions in the sense that he does not know what counts as a 'right' answer. He must therefore, if the dramatic context is to be preserved, get them to substantiate their contributions in terms of the drama. There is nowhere else for them to go; nothing beside the make-believe experience and the everyday world, and he has to know where they are if there is to be any point in going on. Perhaps he is a little too anxious about his drama? Perhaps he could have been more helpful at this moment, and worked to show them how to contribute, instead of simply trying to discover how their contributions were to be treated? Perhaps we would want to say he was a bit too eager? Nevertheless, you can probably see what he is up to, and why it is that he has to know.

38. Further, he wants to know what Ian means on several different levels. For instance, he wants to know in terms of the connection between 'water' and 'living by volcanoes'. This is a matter for the everyday experience of teachers and pupils and their lessons. It may be related to the 'academic task structure' of a lesson about volcanoes. However, he also wants to know which 'reality' the child is



presenting. Is it the everyday experience of 'teachers and pupils' or the make-believe experience of 'by-volcano dwelling children and an adult stranger'? Is the child 'doing drama' or 'presenting experience dramatically'? Finally, he wants to know in terms of the way in which Ian's contribution serves to elaborate the situation which the teacher, in role as a stranger, is concerned to present. All of these levels are indicated in the teacher's response (and request for information), in his use of just that word 'Water?'.

39. At this point, though, he is primarily concerned with the child's meaning in terms of the second of these levels, for he wants to know if they are presenting experience dramatically. He needs to know whether they are still discussing volcanoes, whether they are still in the everyday reality of pretending to live by volcanoes, or whether they are now safely within the make-believe reality where the 'by volcano' dwelling life may be presented dramatically. He needs to know, for until he has their commitment to the dramatic reality, he cannot get them to contribute to the 'social participation structure' of the dramatic experience. This is what it means to suggest that you cannot make a person do drama, for you must have, first, agreement about the way in which experience is to be treated. If one child is not working on the make-believe level or contributing in a way which cannot be interpreted on this level, the drama will not get going. There is no

'in between world' and you are either presenting experience dramatically or else you are not. We may find drama to be no more but the way in which we agree to treat certain aspects of the social life as if they were make-believe. This requires agreement and commitment, and we cannot be half-hearted about it. In this sense the work is done from within, when those involved are already committed, and it can only be done 'properly', in terms of the dramatic context. We are bound to present the social life, but we can choose to treat it as 'managed' or 'real'.

40. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than at the beginning of one of Gavin Bolton's drama lessons with a group of infant children. He is sitting on a chair and he gets the children to agree that when he is on the chair they are out of the story and here within the drama hall; when he is out of the seat they are in the story, in the make-believe. 'Can we agree about that?', he asks, and 'Yes' comes the reply. It is a matter of agreement(54). If the make-believe experience is presented under duress, though, the best we can hope for is the 'doing of drama' for the activity will, by definition, lack the inner generative force. Its 'meaningfulness' will lie elsewhere (in the powers teachers have over pupils, for instance). So, you might say that a group of children have gone to the drama hall and reluctantly done some drama, but you could not say that those same children have presented experience

dramatically, for they would not have left the school hall, and would have been bound by the everyday presentation of 'reluctant pupils'.

41. It is, therefore, very important for the teacher to know whether or not the children are committed to the drama. He also needs to know the level of that commitment. Ian's reply, 'Hot water'(p.21: 26), satisfies the teacher as he is a teacher, but not as he is a drama teacher in role as a stranger. He still cannot tell the nature of the experience within which Ian thinks he is involved. Neither is Ian's next contribution very helpful, 'Mmm...near....near it/' (p.21: 28), for he is still playing it carefully, so that he may not commit himself to either the everyday or make-believe reality. His replies are deliberately vague and ambiguous, and maybe he feels keenly the smart of his over hasty judgement made upon the nature of the earlier teaching situation. If anything, though, his elaboration, 'There's water in the ground in some volcanoes'(p.22: 03), seems to indicate that he is about to commit himself to the everyday experience of teachers and pupils, for he is now generalising, and moving away from the particular dramatic context the teacher is concerned to present. The teacher seems to feel this, too, for he tries to reapply Ian's generalisation to the immediate context, 'So you've got....always got hot water whenever you want it?'(p.22: 05). He is attempting to reformulate Ian's contribution in order

that it may elaborate the drama. He then 'challenges' the group to engage in the presentation of the dramatic reality, by asking, 'Do you all have hot water in your huts?'(p.22: 08).

### 3. Challenging into Drama.

42. On one level, this is a question about the plumbing arrangements in 'by-volcano' dwelling places. However, it has greater significance than this, for it is also a device by which the teacher, in role, 'challenges' the children to respond in the dramatic context. As they do so, they will elaborate that context. The question works to tell them how to contribute properly, and it is made meaningful by their proper contributions. In this sense, the answer which they give (whether it be yes or no) is not really important, for it is the act of their answering which demonstrates their agreement to take part in the drama. They show their willingness to present the dramatic context by responding in role and talking through that context. The only alternative they had, when faced with this question, would be to treat it as some kind of misunderstanding in the everyday world, 'Don't be silly, Mr.Millward, we don't live in huts!'. Then the teacher, confronted by such an unlikely response, would have been forced either to introduce the drama again or else agree to stay in the everyday reality and treat the whole thing as a topic for discussion, 'I know that, but do you think that if you did live by a volcano you would

have hot water in your huts?'. Once again, we may be made aware of the way in which drama is an activity which cannot be engaged in under duress. People can be challenged and coaxed into taking part, but that is all that can be done(55).

43. These children respond to the challenge, for the question has focused their attention upon the context, and they can see now exactly where they are and the kind of contribution which is expected from them. At once, Julia, Shirley and Beverley say 'yes', though they have said nothing until now as they waited to see which way the wind would blow. It is not a problem once they know what is required of them, but each child will have had plenty of experience of treating the social life in the wrong way, and that can be an unsettling business(56).

44. The teacher's next question, 'All from the volcano?'(p.22: 11), is not just a request for information, for it also provides the opportunity for everyone in the group to reaffirm their commitment to the situation they are creating (a make-believe experience in which the children are the experts and the teacher an adult stranger). The same is true of the teacher's question in line 16, 'Does it ever go cold or does it always stay hot for you?'(p.22: 16). Clearly he is not concerned to discover the answers to these questions, for he already knows what they are likely to be and, anyway, they are not very important. Indeed, he only asks questions of this kind because he knows the

answers are obvious. The taped recording has to be listened to in order to appreciate this fully, but even by looking at the transcript it should be fairly plain that the questions in lines 5, 8, 11, and 16 on page 22 are framed in such a way that the children are given little opportunity to disagree. It is in this sense that the answers are important, for the teacher is formulating the questions so that the 'proper' response is indicated. Here that response seems to be of the form, 'agreement between the children'. The teacher is giving them the opportunity to demonstrate that 'agreement'. He is not only using the questions to confirm the experience as one of make-believe, but also in order to help the children (and himself) develop the sense of group unity by which his 'strangeness' is characterised(57). In this way, can directions for the drama become an integral part of the dramatic context(58).

45. This does not mean, of course, that a child could never disagree when faced by such a question. However, if he did (a singularly contrary child might reply, for instance, 'The water in my hut always runs cold'), the responsibility would be upon him to justify this utterance in terms of the dramatic context so that no harm would come to the group's cohesiveness. After all, by responding in this way, the contrary child had indicated his willingness to take part in the dramatic presentation of experience(59). It would be incumbent

upon the teacher in role, though, to accept this unexpected reply, and he could not, for example, keep the drama going and say, 'No, that's not right', as if the pupil had got it wrong. He would have to treat it as part of the developing situation and help to make it meaningful. This is the kind of constraint which the dramatic context puts upon the teacher, and to which we shall return(60).

46. By now, though, everyone seems to be in agreement, for whilst the drama requires careful handling they must also provide hearty and robust support if it is to move beyond this 'stage setting', and develop an inner force of its own. They are now about the construction of a situation beyond the classroom and beyond, too, the volcanoes and villages which helped to get them going. They cannot, now, see this moment's future.

47. At the end of this section (this 'stage setting' in which they all find out where they are), agreement upon several levels has been established. The teacher can now say, 'Oh, that makes...that makes more sense..' (p.22: 20). On one level, and within the drama, he is showing that he understands why they live so near to active volcanoes. However, on another and equally significant level, he is acknowledging that they have begun the business of collaborating in the construction of a situation that is both make-believe and meaningful. Now they are able to move into a 'stage of enactment' for they know how to work to present the dramatic

experience, how to contribute properly. Without this kind of knowledge and agreement, without this commitment, the dramatic presentation of experience cannot get going. The same kind of commitment is required in order to present the everyday social life and we have to know where we are in order to show where we are(61).

#### MANAGING DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE.

48. Now that the drama is underway, we should be in a position to look more closely at a few lines from the transcript. Then may we see how they work, and come to appreciate the way in which dramatic experience is managed, made meaningful and understood. We may feel, then, that we can look at drama of this kind as we can look at any example of social interaction taken from our everyday experience (teachers and pupils, for instance, discussing a 'by-volcano' dwelling life). We may see, as well, that a piece of drama can bear the same kind of scrutiny as engagements in our 'real' life experience, and that it need not be seen as, somehow, second hand or inferior. We may feel that drama, as everyday experience, has a generative force of its own, and that the sense of meaningfulness is an aspect of the dramatic interaction and not some kind of reflection of a real life, to which we are continuously and inextricably bound.

49. First, though, it should be interesting to see how the teacher (through his role in the drama as the



stranger) goes about the business of introducing the immediate topic of the conversation.

20 Teacher. Oh, that makes..that makes more sense..  
 21 ...has anyone...now I mean...I know  
 22 this is not a very fair question, not  
 23 a very nice question to ask because...  
 24 well..has any of you ever had a...close  
 25 friend..hurt..or even killed by the  
 26 volcano?  
 27 All. Yes.  
 28 Teacher. Have you?  
 29 Several. Yes. Yes.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 22)

50. The teacher has to shift the level of meaning, for he wants to move beyond the 'scene painting' and the background 'filling out'. This kind of work had to be done, in order that the setting be taken for granted and become an aspect of their shared experience, but now it has a static quality as of things fixed and past. The teacher wants 'life' breathed into the drama. He wants to focus the attention of those involved away from the situation in which they appear to find themselves (as it was presented to them), and towards developing engagements of their own making which evolve out of the dramatic context.

51. In order to achieve this, he can only work from within the drama and through his role as a stranger, and so he prepares the children by his use of language and action, and by reference to the context, for a particular kind of response. Instead of trying to tell them 'the way it is with them', he moves towards a position from which he can find out 'how it is with them', and so allow them to speak and act through the

drama. He moves slowly, though, and in these early stages marks out with studied care the response he expects from them. He makes use of all kinds of visual cues to achieve this (though, of course, they are not recoverable from the transcript), such as gaze, facial expression, hand and body movement. He lowers his voice and a 'serious' tone creeps into his words, so that the children (who share in the common 'stock of knowledge at hand', and know the signs) are able to appreciate that a change is taking place and will take account of it in their responses. These cues are for the children and they indicate not only the way things are, but also the way in which they should react and contribute in order to show the way things are(62). They are, as are all contributions to conversational exchanges, 'recipient designed', for the speaker is modifying his language to take account of his perception of the listener's point of view(63). The teacher is able to take advantage of his 'knowledge' that the children will treat his contributions as having this quality, in order to guide them through the drama. This ability to treat contributions as being 'recipient designed' is part of the 'stock of knowledge at hand', which all who take part in conversational exchanges draw upon. We shall see the way in which this works as the analysis progresses(64).

52. In all of this, the teacher is attempting, through his use of language, to show the children how his words

should be understood. It is not possible, as we have seen(65), to insist upon a particular meaning and I cannot tell you how to take my words. However, we can and must indicate the right kind of response. So, when the teacher says,

'..has anyone...now I mean...I know this is not a very fair question, not a very nice question to ask because...well..' (p.22: 21-24),

he does not need to go on, for he has done enough, and any further explanation (such as why it is 'not a very nice question') would be unnecessary. It would be unnecessary, for these words (and the way in which they are spoken) are sufficient, in themselves, to provide a context for interpretation. The teacher, in role, is working through the 'social participation structure' in which the manner of his speaking is more important than what he has to say. His attempt to explain why his questions are not very nice (made manifest through his use of language and the visual cues mentioned above) is exactly what is required in order to indicate the nature of things as they stand, and the kind of response that would be appropriate. He must know, for he is a part of the developing situation and is attentive to its demands, when he has said enough.

53. These few words, and the manner in which they are spoken, warn the children that the question about to be put is of a personal nature, and one that, as a stranger, he probably has no right to ask. We can see, already, and at this early stage, that it is quite

impossible to separate the sense of meaningfulness that a situation has from the situation itself (which includes the talk and actions of those involved and the setting made up of each person's contributions, the role they adopt and the way it is created and sustained). In other words, how we take a situation depends upon what we know and what we know is part of how we take it. The teacher is also helping the children to see that his question is likely to bring them a certain amount of distress, and this again points to the kind of response that would be appropriate. All of this information is necessary if they are to understand what he is about to say and be in a position to contribute properly. He is not simply saying, 'Have you ever had a close friend hurt or even killed by a volcano?', for he is also demonstrating the kind of question this is, and the sort of constraints it puts upon those who ask such questions and those who have to reply. As the teacher in role as the stranger speaks to the children in this way, he is putting them in their place (even as he is putting himself in place) and pointing to the kind of relationship that can develop between them.

54. We should now be in a position to see more clearly how all of this is managed, how it is understood. One glance at the transcript should be sufficient to let us see how the teacher struggles for words. We can see him 'hold back' and become apologetic even before the

children can have any idea of what he is trying to do or say. A person reading the transcript may feel inclined to see the teacher's language as being extremely awkward and inadequate, '...has anyone...now I mean...I know this is not....'(p.22: 21-26). However, the children do not think this, as they listen to him and hear what he says within the setting, as they hear his words (and the way that he speaks them) as indicators of what is going on and exemplars of what is to come. For, in spite of all appearances, the teacher has chosen his words with care (and the gaps and the pauses, the little hesitations and the infelicities), and he only comes to the question when he senses the moment is right for it to be effective and meaningful. He is building a context within which the children may find his question to be sensible. As the teacher in role chooses his language carefully in order that the children may see what he means, then so do they make sure he appreciates that the situation is sensible to them (though the way in which they do this through direction of gaze, eye contact, nods of the head, etc., are lost to the reader of the transcript). They are made ready for the question when it comes by the question as it comes, and in this way the teacher, through his role as the stranger, is able to guide the drama and the children's understanding.

55. The point to be appreciated is that it is more important that the teacher demonstrates that he is

searching particularly diligently for the right word or phrase than that he is searching particularly diligently for it. He has to be concerned that others are aware of his concern, and this is as true in our everyday experience as it is in our drama. In this sense, it is not what we are doing but what we are seen to be doing, not what the world is but what we show it to be. This business of searching particularly diligently for the right word is a managed accomplishment, and there are ways of doing it and conventions to be followed if it is to be done successfully. The methods and practices used to achieve this are the same whether we are presenting the make-believe or everyday experience. This is why it may be so hard to distinguish this kind of drama from 'real' life, and why those involved seem to work so 'naturally'. Even the teacher, consciously guiding the drama through his role in the drama, chooses his words carefully yet without a thought. They are only doing those things which they do all the days of their lives, and it is not the case that this kind of 'management' has to be done more deliberately in drama than in everyday life. The teacher in role has chosen his words carefully, but not more carefully than he would have done in an everyday encounter of this kind when, as a caring adult, he tried to prepare a child for a potentially upsetting question. He would demonstrate his care through the form of the question and the child's appreciation of his caring nature would help her

to make sense of his question. In both cases, the 'meaningfulness' of the encounter is developed here, before our eyes.

56. The teacher is no more aware of 'managing' this aspect of the situation than he would be in his daily life. The drama is now beyond craft, beyond good and bad acting, and those involved are presenting experience dramatically as their contributions are appropriate in terms of the dramatic context, the context within which their words and actions are made meaningful. They all have responsibility for making the situation visible and meaningful, and we shall try to uncover the nature of this responsibility in the next two chapters(66).

## Chapter Five.

### CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT.

1. The business of making situations visible and meaningful is not satisfied simply by people talking and acting. Words and deeds are not enough, and this chapter involves a shift in our approach to dramatic and everyday contexts as we move from that which is said and done to make situations meaningful to the way in which the structure of a conversational exchange contributes directly to its meaningfulness. For this purpose we shall try to discount any 'meaning' the words may have in themselves in order to concentrate our attention upon those things that are done within the dramatic context to make them meaningful. We should be able to appreciate that it is not what the words bring to the situation that is important but, rather, what is done with them there. It should help us to see the active nature of our involvement in making dramatic and everyday situations plain. First, though, we need to look at conversations, at the ways in which they work and are managed.

### CONVERSATIONS.

2. Conversation analysis originated in the work of certain ethnomethodologists, and was borne of their concern to achieve a detailed study of the practices through which ordinary, everyday situations are managed by the people involved in them. They were responding to the question, 'How do people manage to make the social



world seem real?', and they directed their attention towards the structure of everyday conversations(1).

3. Conversations(2) are seen by the ethnomethodologist as the means by which we make our meanings clear, the means by which we come to agree about the topic of interest (even though we may be in the midst of an argument). They are occasions within which we feel part of a common, intersubjective experience. They are 'vehicles of reality maintenance'(3), and their presence provides a sense of structure. They give to those involved, the feeling that they are engaged in a 'meaningful activity'. Conversations have the capacity to generate a sense of reality, for they enable us to agree about the world and help us to feel that there is a world about which we can agree. The business of engaging in a conversation does this for us(4).

4. Clearly, though, a lot of work must be done by the contributors to a conversation in order that it may provide this sense of social structure and, as Gordon Wells says,

'it is more than a simple succession of functionally defined, independent utterances'(5).

It is more too, than several people taking turns to speak, for if it is to be coherent and meaningful, if it is to be mutually rewarding, then each turn must be constructed to take account of the previous turn and to indicate the way in which the following turn should be formed. There must be, according to Grice(6), certain 'conversational maxims' which people obey in order that

they may interpret the content of, and the intentions behind, each other's contributions. So, the things which people say within conversations must be treated as being informative, relevant, truthful and perspicuous. As we shall come to see, it is not necessary, as far as meaning making is concerned, that such contributions are informative, relevant, truthful and perspicuous, only that they should be treated as such(7). Above all, and as Grice points out, the participants are bound by the 'co-operative principle' to make their

'conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged'(8).

To be involved in a conversation is to talk and act in an appropriate manner and in accordance with particular rules and conventions; it is to engage in a spontaneous, yet tightly patterned form of social interaction.

5. Harvey Sacks sought to describe the methods whereby members create and then manage conversations. He produced a list of properties or features by which talk could be identified as conversation. This list(9), can be seen as a description of the things people do when they are engaged in conversation (as opposed to lecturing or debating, for instance), and whilst its features are characteristic of conversations and hold true of all conversations in all circumstances, they yet maintain the situated character of each particular conversation(10). They may be seen, also, as a

'specification of the social structure of

conversations'(11),  
by which conversations may be viewed as products of  
members' methods for creating  
'openings, topic change, turn takings, closings,  
etc.'(12),  
and by which they may be seen as 'managed  
accomplishments'. They are both properties of  
conversation and a set of conventional rules by which  
conversations are managed.

6. So, a 'speaker turn', for instance, is something at  
which all parties to a conversation must work. It  
cannot be known in advance, there is no particular  
length and it has to be negotiated 'on the spot'. We  
talk, therefore, with particular others in mind, and our  
talk is constantly modified in the light of this  
concern. Contributions to conversations are 'recipient  
designed' in that they depend upon people paying close  
attention to what others are doing and saying. The talk  
by a person in a conversation is constructed in ways  
that display an 'orientation and a sensitivity' towards  
significant others who are taking part. A person talks  
with his listener in mind(13).

7. We may appreciate, therefore, that it is not  
possible to engage in a conversation without being  
actively involved, for the conversation is negotiated by  
all participants. It is negotiated by those who talk  
and those who listen, and at the moment of their talking  
and listening. Conversations are 'tailor made' by  
those, and for those, involved. They are made for

themselves, and members collaborate to produce a context which makes sense of what they say. The 'meanings' conveyed by the utterances are developed in the process of actual conversations, through the way in which the conversational work is done, and as it elaborates a familiar context. Each participant, in turn, sets up opportunities and constraints for the move which is to follow even as he takes account of the opportunities and constraints provided by the previous contribution. This is part of the sense in which we may see the 'making of meaning' as a collaborative activity, and we shall be able to see these things happening as we look at how conversations are structured to present dramatic situations(14).

8. For the moment, though, can we not feel that taking part in a conversational exchange requires the same attention to the situation and the same concern to produce appropriate responses as are needed in drama, or as we go about the business of presenting everyday experience?(15) The conversational exchange seems to be at the heart of social activity, whether it be in the everyday or make-believe reality. It is within this kind of interaction that so much of the work is done in order for our social life to appear visible and meaningful(16). The primary concern, therefore, of the participants is to 'keep going' so that they may maintain the sense of social structure and enjoy the feeling of living in a world which they find explicable.

For this reason, too, conversations have to be ended properly and not simply left in the air. They have to be brought to a close even as they have to be set going. They have to be consistently and continually managed and they demand our attention(17).

9. These conversational exchanges may be grounded in the child's earliest social experiences. As Bruner has shown(18), 'rule bound' sequences are to be found in the exchange of objects between the mother and infant, and the initial acquisition of communicative skills occurs within the context of mother and infant carrying out tasks jointly. It may be that the structure of language reflects this. Certainly, this 'give and take' contains the idea of 'an initiator' and 'a recipient', and it provides a

'social basis for language to enter the routine, and eventually for language to become the carrier of action'(19).

It is not only the conversational relationship between initiator and recipient which is established in these activities, for so, also, is the familiar context within which such exchanges take place. This points to the reflexive force within engagements of this kind.

10. The basic game of give and take becomes a very regular, highly developed and sophisticated activity which serves as a firm foundation for the more complex and elaborate tasks that are to come(20). The child is learning, in collaboration with others, to get things done and, at the same time, learning to use appropriate

communicative devices and conventions to signal his partner to help in the process. From the start, language acquisition occurs within the context of 'action dialogue', in which joint relationships are being regulated by the infant and the adult. Already, social experience is being invested with a sense of social structure and, as Bruner concludes,

'the simulative, conventionalised and rule sensitive spirit of play seems to be a sine qua non for language learning'(21).

11. There is, then, a sense of collaborative activity in a rule governed procedure, and not only does this provide an opportunity for learning about the relationship between talk and the context within which it occurs, but it also provides the opportunity to learn about the structure of conversations with its pattern of 'reciprocally related turns'(22). Gordon Wells makes this point very clearly,

'...in the context of playful collaborative routines the child gradually learns the reversability of the roles of actor and recipient of action and maps them onto the somewhat parallel roles of sender and receiver of verbal communication. In this way the concept of dialogue is established, first in the form of reciprocal action and then gradually with the introduction of action related utterances, in the use of utterance as an alternative means of interpersonal action'(23).

12. Surely this will seem familiar to those of us who are concerned to present social experience dramatically? Can we not recognise in this 'give and take' the kind of collaboration which dramatic situations demand?

13. Furthermore, the way in which the adult engages

with the child during these early experiences is significant for those who would seek to teach through dramatic contexts. The child in these early exchanges makes a contribution which is as important as that of the adult(24). From the earliest time, the need to communicate with a conversational partner affects the structure of the utterances employed, and the mother's speech is adapted to meet the requirements of the infant and the developing situation.

14. It is interesting that this 'mother's speech' does not appear reliably until the child is old enough to respond to the adult's talk(25), and Catherine Snow has shown that even experienced mothers are not able to produce adequate 'mother's speech' if the child is not present to hear(26). In situations such as this, when we could reasonably expect the adult to dominate the interaction, we find the mother adjusting her speech to meet the needs of the child. It is rather like teaching in role, and even very young children are able to match their speech to the situation, for Snow has examples of three year-old children modifying their speech for even younger listeners(27).

'The essentially two sided nature of conversation means that anything which adults achieve within it must be with the active collaboration of the children'(28).

This kind of constraint is put upon all who contribute to a conversation, for to work effectively utterances must be designed to suit the context of which they are a part and through which they may be seen as meaningful.

We have to contribute with the others' interests at heart(29).

15. The conversational exchange is the point at which we actively make sense of our social experience.

Conversations do not 'stand for' or represent something else, and it makes no sense to try to get behind the conversation in order to 'see' what people intend or mean. We are looking at an activity which accounts for the intentions of each contributor as well as the way in which they interpret the intentions of the others. It is a situation which they not only construct, but use to make sense of what they say. We might say that the 'meaningfulness' of the situation is the conversation itself(30).

16. By coming to this kind of agreement about a topic, by engaging in a conversation, the contributors find the world a familiar, explicable and sensible place.

However, it is the sense of shared understanding which is responsible for this attitude towards the social world rather than any common experience which could be pointed to as being 'the way things are'. We cannot uncover what this 'understanding' means to each individual, and it seems to be enough that the context of our talk can be managed so as to accommodate (even as it is described by) our different perceptions. We then have a 'match' which enables us to go away feeling we have talked about something, feeling we have talked about the same thing. We might remember the work the



children and the teacher of the discussion had to do as they went about the business of producing a sense of shared understanding, a feeling that they were in the same place talking about the same thing(31). It is the talking, the conversing, that counts.

17. All of this should help us to appreciate that there are levels of understanding, and it should alert us to the dangers of assuming that because we agree about a situation there must be some 'overall meaning' which encompasses and describes the occasion for everyone concerned. The conversation is not 'about' something, rather it is the 'thing' itself. We do not have to look beyond the work done by those involved in the conversation to find its meaningfulness. Even so, for the conversation to work, we have to trust that we are capable of understanding the other's point of view and that he has a point of view to understand. Without this kind of assumption we would not even bother to take part. It is not, of course, necessary that we do share such a perspective and if we did, presumably there would be no need to engage in the business of conversing. In a world of 'given' meanings there would be no place for conversation. All would be apparent and there would be nothing more to be done; nothing to negotiate.

18. When we try to decide what a person means in a particular conversation we have to look beyond the grammatical and semantic conventions which seem to govern their utterances, and attend to the interactive

process by which commonly perceived (though variously interpreted) contexts are produced. It is not that the conditions of 'text' no longer count, but rather that much more emphasis is put upon the situation within which the words are spoken; the situation which is in part described by those words. There is, within conversation, a 'primacy of interpersonal over logical functions', and if a person fails to maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships then the conversation will not be sustained. So, whilst it might be quite possible to talk to a class of nodding children, you cannot hold a conversation with one who has a wandering mind. Furthermore, you cannot hold a conversation with one who only listens and who does not demonstrate his listening and his appreciation of what you are doing. Drama demands the same kind of active co-operation and commitment from all involved. We have to agree to take part even though we are 'condemned to be meaningful' and cannot escape our responsibility for making the social life visible(32).

19. Conversation is always directed towards particular individuals and they have to share most of the relevant knowledge. There is always some intention to bring about a certain effect (perhaps influencing the other's point of view or maintaining a particular relationship) and the immediate 'feedback' permits the continuous monitoring of the listener to determine if the utterances need to be modified, expanded or tempered in

some way. We could see this happening as the teacher tried to decide whether the children were engaged in presenting experience dramatically(33) and, of course, as the first teacher worked to make Ian's contributions relevant(34). It is not possible to understand a conversation by attending only to the words that are used (as if they were, simply, meaningful) and, as Bruner pointed out, certain uses of language cannot be explained without referring to the general pattern of activity of which they form a central part(35). For this reason, it has been variously suggested(36) that the ideal situation for the language learner (and, one could say, for the 'learner of the social life') is to receive utterances encoding that which is the focus of joint attention. Of particular value are those utterances which incorporate and extend matter previously contributed to the discourse by the child.

20. There is a kind of

'internal two tone structure of "known" and "unknown" information'(37),

which implies that there is always some common ground, some known information between the speaker and the hearer in a conversation. Some parts of what a speaker says

'merely make reference to features which he takes to be already present in the interpenetrating worlds of speaker and hearer. Others have the status of information in that they are presented as if likely to change the world of the hearer'(38).

This does not mean that the 'known' element in our conversations should be seen as redundant, for it is

this which serves as a link between the participants, and ensures that we keep 'in touch' with one another. It is this 'link' which helps to give to our talk (and to our sense of social life) the feeling that we are involved in a 'shared experience' which we enjoy in common with each other. So, we contribute to conversations as we speak and act in an appropriate manner, as we connect with the 'known' (in terms of both structure and topic), and we have to do this if we are to speak sensibly. If we do not, then our contributions are likely to be discounted(39).

21. Conversations, then, do not just happen but are accomplished. The management of a conversation is a collaborative activity in which members are sensitive to each other and direct their attention towards the others taking part. In this way, conversations uphold the dignity and responsibility of all those involved, and whilst adults (for instance) do have extra 'rights' they are given no opportunity to impose their 'meanings', for the activity takes account of all contributions.

Conversations may be seen to provide a model for a relationship between children and their 'teachers' in which those involved may be engaged in creating new levels of meaning, new learning. Drama may be one of the means available to us, as teachers, whereby we can get in touch with the pre-school (and with the 'out of school') learning process, through which people learn to work in the social world in the company of experienced

partners in conversation. This will be developed in Chapter Eight, 'Teaching and Learning in Drama'.

22. In the meantime, this brief look at the nature of the conversational exchange should be sufficient to provide a background to the analysis which follows, for I want to show how the structure of our talk and the way in which words are presented is part of the meaningfulness of our contributions, whether we are concerned to present everyday or make-believe experience. The analysis may also serve to elaborate some of the features of conversation which have been referred to in a rather cursory fashion here.

23. 'Conversation analysis is a distinctive approach to research within ethnomethodology. Conversation analysts study the social organisation of talk by practices contained in the talk itself. The reflexivity of conversation, as embodied in its self-organising practices, is the core topic of the research. Conversation analysis culminates in the specification of rules to which conversations and conversationalists are normatively accountable. The rules are understood to be a necessary component of an adequate model of the actor. The rules are relatively independent of the specific topics of conversation. Many apply invariantly in conversation on any topic. Thus the structure provided by the rules is a formal structure'(40).

24. If we attend to the interests of the conversation analysts, we should be able to look at the way in which conversations in drama are structured. In examining how conversations work we should also see how they are made meaningful, for the structure of the conversation and its meaningfulness are inextricably entwined(41). Of course, it is only for the purpose of analysis that we can concentrate upon one aspect of this business of

making sense, and even then we shall often find ourselves led astray, for there is more to the making of meaning than simply uncovering a structure. Still, by working in this way, we should be able to see that conversations in drama may be as formally structured as those of our everyday experience, and that they are produced by the same methods and practices and may be described by the same rules. Conversations in drama, we may feel, need not be shadows or reflections of the real thing. Indeed, they cannot be if they are truly to be called conversations.

25. Here is an extract from the transcript. It should be familiar, for it continues where we left off in the last chapter.

(p.22)

20 Teacher. Oh, that makes...that makes more sense..  
 21 ...has anyone...now I mean...I know  
 22 this is not a very fair question, not  
 23 a very nice question to ask because...  
 24 well...has any of you ever had a...close  
 25 friend...hurt...or even killed by the  
 26 volcano?  
 27 All. Yes.  
 28 Teacher. Have you?  
 29 Several. Yes. Yes.

(p.23)

01 Teacher. Well...you...you know was it a relation  
 02 of yours or...  
 03 Shirley. No it was just a close friend.  
 04 Teacher. A close friend. What happened? Do  
 05 you....can you remember what happened?  
 06 Shirley. Mmm...it was just a rock fell on her.  
 07 Teacher. Really. What/  
 08 Shirley. She was running away from it..  
 09 Teacher. I see.....and did...I mean....you know,  
 10 did...were you there when it happened?  
 11 Shirley. Mmm.....yes.  
 12 Teacher. Oh that must have been terrible. Were  
 13 you able to do anything or...or not?  
 14 Shirley. No, I just shouted and..  
 15 Teacher. Did you?  
 16 Shirley. And they never heard me.

17 Teacher. Have...has quite a few people in the  
18 village been hurt by the volcano/  
19 Mark. Mmm/  
20 Julia. Mmm/  
21 Shirley. Yes.  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 22-23)

26. It is worthwhile uncovering some of the ways in which this piece is managed, for it appears to be a real accomplishment. We might wonder, for instance, how it is possible for these two people to succeed in creating a situation (in less than thirty lines of dialogue and lasting for only as many seconds) which is recognisable as one of 'protective adult and distressed child'.

Further, we might be surprised to see it presented in the form of a conversation which has all the attributes and 'sense making' qualities of a similar encounter in everyday life. It really does look like an impressive achievement.

27. Certainly they do not simply decide to accomplish this. The teacher does not sit down with Shirley and the others beforehand and say, for instance, "Now, I'm going to be a kind and considerate adult who, whilst asking you some awkward and distressing questions (which as a stranger, I really have no right to ask) is yet concerned to protect you from being too upset by the memories I have asked you to recount. You, meanwhile (this to Shirley) as the young child, will have to think of things that could have happened to you but you will not have to talk about them in too much detail for, as you will appreciate, I shall want to keep you from being too distressed. Whilst all of this is going on, the

rest of you will.....". It is not too difficult to imagine the kind of drama which would result from such a preparation or the kind of response he could expect from the children when he finally got around to saying, "Do you think you can manage that?". Yet, with no instructions they manage to do all of this, and much more as well. They need no rehearsals and they have no false starts; they present a situation which is familiar and recognisable, and they do so with exemplary economy of both talk and action.

28. They succeed because they do not set out to succeed and they have not something in their minds which they are trying to reproduce. They do not put a 'meaning' or a particular significance upon the situation before they start, but rather come to understand what happens during and after the event. In this way the meaningfulness is a part of the situation they have created together. It is something they go away with and not something which they bring with them at the start. They understand what is going on (even as we do, watching or reading the transcript) as they feel 'at home' and as, later, they are able to reflect upon the experience and remember what happened. This is how we find everyday life to be meaningful, too.

29. We should now try to tease out some of the ways whereby the teacher and the pupils manage to make a situation of 'protective adult and distressed child' visible to themselves and each other through the manner



of their speaking(42). We shall begin this part of the enquiry by looking at the way in which conversation is structured and then go on to see how language is used and words presented so that they can appear meaningful. We shall deliberately avoid treating these words as little 'carriers of meaning' and rely instead upon the structure and presentation of the conversational exchange to elaborate its meaningfulness.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF CONVERSATION IN A DRAMATIC CONTEXT.

30. The first thing to notice is that the teacher in role as the stranger introduces the topic of the conversation, '..has any of you ever had a...close friend..hurt..or even killed by the volcano?'(p.22: 24-26). He has the right to do this within the drama not because he is a teacher, but because he is an adult stranger who has to define his role initially by drawing attention to those things which the children (as they are 'by volcano dwelling children') know, and he does not know. This 'right' to open the topic comes out of the dramatic situation (adult stranger and children at home) and by taking advantage of it, the teacher defines his role and those of the children as well. By acting this way he elaborates the situation. The point is, that the relationship between the stranger and the children is indicated through the structure of the conversation, and not through any intrinsic 'meaning' carried by the words themselves. It is not that they do not carry meaning, but that they are made meaningful in

situations where they are used(43).

31. These extra 'rights' enjoyed by one party to the conversation (in this case, the adult stranger) seem to be part of those rights held by adults over children generally. They probably point to very deep structures engrained in our society. In this sense they are part of the business of bringing up children(44). However, this distribution of rights is not a fixed attribute of adult/child exchanges. There are times when the distribution is shifted more in favour of the child (as, say, when the child is an expert talking to an adult who is a stranger) and, like all aspects of conversations, they have to be negotiated within the situations they serve to make visible. We shall see this occurring in a forceful way when we look at how 'turn taking' is managed in dramatic situations(45). Furthermore, as the drama develops we shall see the way this 'shift' affects the structure of the conversation even as it is made visible through that structure(46). This, too, should help us to feel that it is through the reflexive force of conversational exchanges that meanings are managed, and not by reference to something 'out there' which the conversation seems to be about. Finally, there may not be so many opportunities during most teaching days for the distribution of rights between the teacher and the pupil to be shifted in favour of the latter in this way, and for so long as the talk is structured to present the roles of teachers and pupils we will look in vain for

much evidence of such a shift(47).

32. Having initiated the topic, the teacher in role has earned the right to select the next speaker. Turn taking in conversational exchanges is a central concern of the conversation analysts. Harvey Sacks(48) suggests two methods by which turns may be allocated. The speaker can select the next speaker or, should he fail to do so, then the next speaker selects himself. This looks like a statement about the obvious, however, it does matter which of these two occurs, for that is significant(49). It is significant in that it does not just happen but is managed, and it is significant in that selection takes place.

33. Whilst taking account of these two methods of selection, Sacks uncovers three rules which govern the business of turn taking in conversations(50). Briefly, if the speaker selects the next speaker, then the person so selected has an obligation to respond which is not shared by the others taking part in the conversation. This is the first of the three rules. Secondly, if the speaker fails to select the next one, then the next speaker selects himself by speaking. Finally, if no one selects himself then the current speaker may, though he is not bound to, continue talking until another opportunity for selection arises. At that point, the three rules apply again. From this we may appreciate that turn taking opportunities do not simply occur but are made to happen(51). We can see how important this

becomes if we consider how it is used in the drama.

'...has any of you ever had a...close friend..  
hurt..or even killed by the volcano?' (p.22: 24).

By not taking full advantage of his right to select the next speaker under the first rule, and in so doing encouraging the next speaker to select him or herself, the teacher in role as the stranger elaborates the situation by acknowledging their expertise and their right to know who amongst them is best qualified to answer his question. He is, as it were, saying 'you select', and he is using the structure of the conversation to carry the information. The structure has implications for the meaningfulness of the dramatic situation.

34. When he receives no help (he simply gets a chorus of 'yeses' when he was looking for one 'yes') we might conclude that the teacher in role reasserts his right of selection as we see him address Shirley,

'Well..you..you know was it a relation of yours  
or....' (p.23: 01). Perhaps he has selected her

through the use of gaze or some kind of visual contact which is not recoverable from the transcript. However, it is just as likely that Shirley has selected herself (again by some means beyond a transcript of their talk) and that the teacher in addressing her was simply responding to this. In other words, his 'Well..you..you know was it a relation of yours or....', may be treated as the second part of an 'adjacency pair'(52) of which her method of self selection (hidden from us) was the

first. In the end, though, questions of this kind do not matter, for the teacher in role speaks as if she had selected herself, and it is this which counts as we make sense of the situation and as we feel we understand what is going on. The turn taking is managed so as to indicate the kind of encounter that is being presented. It is used to point to the kind of people they are, the relationship that exists between them and, therefore, the kind of response that would be appropriate. Shirley appreciates this and responds as if she had selected herself in the first place, 'No it was just a close friend'(p.23: 03). The teacher in role as the stranger shows them where they are and what they should do in order to uncover the nature of a dramatic situation such as 'caring adult and distressed child', for this can only be presented within a concentrated interaction between two people. The business of turn taking is very important.

35. The teacher's use of the strange phrase, '..has any of you ever had a...'(p.22: 24), is also interesting in this regard. Clearly it is grammatically muddled and yet it is this very muddledness which enables it to express what it means. The teacher in role is saying, in effect, 'any of you can answer this question, but only one of you must', and he uses an unusual formulation in order to express himself(53). On its own, this would not be enough to achieve the teacher's ends of getting one of the children to self select, but

it is another example of the structure of the conversation being used to elaborate the setting. We can see that the pattern of the conversation is indicated by the situation they are creating, and the meaningfulness of that situation is partly characterised by the way in which the conversation is structured.

36. As the teacher in role addresses Shirley (p.23: 01) and indicates that she has selected herself to speak, he also excludes the others. He concentrates the attention of everyone upon the point of significance, the relationship between Shirley and the stranger. Now, in a conversation the attention of those involved has to be focused, and the situation managed continuously, from moment to moment. In this sense, these two (Shirley and the stranger) do not simply exclude the others at the beginning and then forget about them. Rather, they can only exclude them because they are a part of the situation. Their function is to stand excluded and they remain a significant aspect of the context as they are continually excluded(54).

37. This business, which everyone serves to make visible, is part of the work which has to be done so that the situation can be seen and recognised as one in which a 'protective adult' is talking and attending to a 'distressed child'. We see it through the respect and consideration shown by those attending to what is happening, and they (the excluded ones) had to be 'shown' how to contribute properly. It did not just

happen. The excluded ones stand, listen and watch; they take part and they do not interrupt. They are actively involved in making the situation plain and they help to make it sensible. They wait their turn to speak, and they know when it comes as the teacher in role brings them 'back' into the conversation (p.23: 17-18). The way in which turn taking is negotiated in conversations is part of the structure which helps us to make sense of what is going on.

38. It is tempting to see the following extract from the transcript as a series of unfinished and interrupted statements, and this adds to the general impression of 'untidiness' which always seems to accompany examples of desultory conversation in both our everyday and make-believe experience of life. This conversational exchange has all the appearance of being ill-considered, unstructured and inadequately developed, and we might not feel inclined to point to it as a means of building a sense of stability into our social lives. It seems to be inconsequential, as if it were simply allowed to 'spill out', and it is hard to believe that the contributors gave much attention to one another's statements. Look at this short example, for instance;

01 Teacher. Well..you..you know was it a relation  
 02 of yours or...  
 03 Shirley. No it was just a close friend.  
 04 Teacher. A close friend. What happened? Do  
 05 you....can you remember what happened?  
 06 Shirley. Mmm...it was just a rock fell on her.  
 07 Teacher. Really. What/  
 08 Shirley. She was running away from it..  
 09 Teacher. I see.....and did...I mean....you know,  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 23)

39. It is studied with little pauses and repetitions and Shirley interrupts the teacher in role on two occasions and he interrupts her at the end. It seems to be disjointed and awkward. However, when we look at it more closely, we may find that it is not like this at all. We shall be looking at the pauses and repetitions later(55) and so, for the moment, will concentrate upon the interruptions.

40. We have to appreciate that these are not interruptions in the sense that one party to the conversation has 'cut across' the other, discounting the topic and replacing it by one of their own. Rather, they should be seen as points of 'shared agreement' or understanding. It is the point at which enough has been said and done for the next turn to be usefully made. So instead of seeing these examples of turn taking as interruptions, it would be better to see them as moments at which the listener is able to think, "now I understand what you intend and there is no need for you to say anything more, for I can already make a sensible contribution to the situation". It is the point at which he feels he can successfully anticipate the speaker's intentions, the point at which he can take over and carry on.

41. However, in seeing it in this way, we should also appreciate that both parties to the conversation have to 'agree' about the right moment for the interruption. It is not just that one of them is listening to the other



and when she thinks she has heard enough to anticipate his intentions, interrupts to develop the conversation, for here, the speaker is also indicating the point at which it would be sensible to interrupt. The teacher in role is, in a sense, asking to be interrupted, and it is not true that interruptions of this kind are determined by the person doing the interrupting(56). There is an appropriate place for the interruption to take place and there is a 'right' time. This should be clear even by looking at the transcript. In the first two lines on page 23, we can see the teacher holding back, delaying information and waiting to be interrupted. He 'invites' Shirley to interrupt him, and even gives her the words with which to interrupt, 'a close friend'(p.22: 24). He is 'prompting' her to interrupt. Furthermore, he gives her the opportunity to contradict him by letting her provide an alternative (which he had, in fact, 'fed' her a moment or two before) to his own suggestion. This is how it reads,

Teacher. ....was it a relation of yours or...

Shirley. No it was a close friend. (p.23: 01-03).

She interrupts him and she contradicts him, yet this 'interruption' was managed by both parties to the conversation and is an integral part of the structure of that conversation. It enables the child in role to exert the extra 'rights' she has within the dramatic situation (made visible in her interrupting and 'putting him right') whilst not having to possess the 'expert' knowledge by which she enjoys those 'rights'. As

Dorothy Heathcote says in a slightly different context,

'through structuring the teacher protects the student from the debilitating effects of ignorance'(57).

42. That these two can work in this way may at first seem remarkable, but it comes of their ability to manipulate the structure of the conversation and take advantage of the rules governing the use of 'adjacency pairs'(58). Adjacency pairs are utterances produced by two different contributors to a conversation, and where the first utterance makes the second 'sequentially relevant'. For instance, a first greeting (say, "hello") invites the production of a second greeting ("hello"). It is not simply that "hello" is said twice, but that the first "hello" sets up an expectation of a second in a way that the second does not demand a third, and so on. Of course, not all adjacency pairs are bound as strongly as this (and, even here, the second greeting may take many forms, "goodmorning", for instance, or "hi") for many occur as questions simply looking for answers. Furthermore, though a first part gives rise to expectations of the second, we are not plunged into a chasm of meaninglessness when these expectations are not realised. It is significant when you do not get a response to your "goodmorning" because of the expectations set up by the first part, and such a 'failure' demands an explanation. Perhaps the other did not hear, or was distracted; perhaps we have given cause for offence. Once again we may see how a deviation from

the norm encourages us to work harder at the business of making life meaningful(59). We are encouraged to account for the inexplicable.

43. The kind of expectation, therefore, which the first part of an adjacency pair puts upon the second, varies and we can see this happening quite easily if we look at the way adjacency pairs are used in this piece of conversation from the drama. Here is a record of the adjacency pairs used in the extract. They are grouped in pairs, first and second parts.

(p.22)

[1] 24 Teacher. well..has any of you ever had a...close  
 25 friend..hurt..or even killed by the  
 26 volcano?  
 27 All. Yes.

[2] 28 Teacher. Have you?  
 29 Several. Yes. Yes.

(p.23)

[3] 01 Teacher. Well..you..you know was it a relation  
 02 of yours or...  
 03 Shirley. No it was just a close friend.

[4] 04 Teacher. A close friend. What happened? Do  
 05 you....can you remember what happened?  
 06 Shirley. Mmm....it was just a rock fell on her.

[5] 07 Teacher. Really. What/  
 08 Shirley. She was running away from it..

[6] 09 Teacher. I see.....and did...I mean....you know,  
 10 did...were you there when it happened?  
 11 Shirley. Mmm.....yes.

[7] 12 Teacher. Oh that must have been terrible. Were  
 13 you able to do anything or..or not?  
 14 Shirley. No, I just shouted and..

[8] 15 Teacher. Did you?  
 16 Shirley. And they never heard me.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 22-23)

44. Clearly, in some of these examples the first part of the adjacency pair does no more than seek an answer.

This is the case, for instance, in numbers [1] and [2]. Nothing in particular is expected or suggested beyond a simple "yes" or "no", and only a failure to respond at all would appear remarkable, and be treated as inadequate. However, some of the first part pairs in demanding an answer also seem to be expecting something more. In number [4], for instance, a reply of "yes" would be considered strange and would probably prompt the speaker of the first part to ask for more, "Well go on, tell me what happened". The question seems to seek an explanation. Even an answer of "no" would probably need to be justified. In a case like this, the second speaker is not free to answer as she wishes but rather as she sees fit in so far as she takes account of the first part of the adjacency pair. The way in which the question is structured indicates how it should be dealt with and is a kind of standard by which the answer may be treated as adequate or not.

45. If we look now at number [3], and take into account the teacher's earlier suggestion of a 'close friend'(p.22: 24), we may see that his first part indicates precisely the way in which Shirley should respond. As she is attentive to the structure of the conversation and as she recognises the force of the first part of an adjacency pair and the constraints it puts upon her, Shirley 'interrupts' on cue and in a way that the teacher in role expects. He 'leads' her into her answer and it would be hard for her to respond

differently. She is 'told' how and when to interrupt, how and when to contradict, by the teacher's use of first part utterances. She seems to have control of the structure of the conversation as the one who interrupts and contradicts, yet it is through that same structure that she receives her instructions. We get another glimpse of the reflexive nature of conversation as we see that the structure is both in and about the situation it serves to make visible. We can uncover this structure when we know what is going on, and part of our understanding of what is going on comes from our attention to the structure. All of which, as we shall come to see, has important implications for teaching through drama(60).

46. There are several interesting points which arise from looking at adjacency pairs and their use in this piece of dramatic conversation. For instance, we can see how the teacher in role is using the structure (and the children's 'knowledge' of that structure) to influence the topic. By using first part utterances which put narrow constraints upon the kind of response that is acceptable, he can influence what is said without seeming to do so. Later, we shall be able to see the children taking advantage of the rules of conversation in this way as they 'show' the teacher in role as the stranger how he should behave(61). Clearly, these are not the kind of rules which can be followed deliberately, not rules that a person could

endeavour to reproduce as he tried to recreate situations that looked like everyday life(62). They are rules which cannot be followed or demonstrated with craft, and they can only be uncovered through analysis. That we can uncover their use in a dramatic extract of this kind should help us to appreciate that it is not just a representation of everyday experience. Rather it is presented and made meaningful by members drawing upon those same methods and practices which they use to present a stable and coherent social life.

47. We may also see how the regular use of adjacency pairs of the question and answer form, enables the parties to the conversation to continually monitor each other's understanding, whilst at the same time, displaying their own appreciation of what is going on. They are a means of keeping 'in touch' with one another, and through this, they help to provide the sense of social structure that must be present if situations are to appear meaningful. They also serve to 'bind' the conversation and give it a sense of orderliness and cohesion. One of Sack's rules governing the nature of adjacency pairs shows that when a first part is produced it is incumbent upon the next speaker to produce the second part as soon as the first utterance is complete. By such means, gaps and overlaps in the conversation are minimised. Often first parts are signalled as such very early in their construction (as in these examples with the use of words like 'has', 'have', 'what' and 'can' to

start sentences and indicate questions) so that others involved in the conversation may be warned of the approaching turn taking opportunity. By such means, the next speaker will, if he is attentive, be ready and waiting for the right moment to speak. This is why even the most desultory and apparently ill-considered conversation flows smoothly with very few 'genuine' hesitations or interruptions. It is interesting to see a piece of conversation taken from a dramatic encounter moving effortlessly from turn to turn in this way, and with no thought on the part of those involved as to how it may be managed. Indeed, they think no more of this than they do when engaged in conversations within their everyday experience.

48. Finally, and perhaps most interesting of all, the conversation may be presented quite differently. Here is another record of the adjacency pairs in this piece:

(p.22)

[1] 24 Teacher. well..has any of you ever had a..close  
       25 friend..hurt..or even killed by the  
       26 volcano?  
       27 All. Yes.

[2] 28 Teacher. Have you?  
       29 Several. Yes. Yes.

[3]  
       01 Teacher. Well..

(p.23)

[4] 01 Teacher. you..you know was it a relation  
       02 of yours or...  
       03 Shirley. No..

[5] 03 Shirley. ...it was just a close friend.  
       04 Teacher. A close friend.

[6] 04 Teacher. What happened? Do  
       05 you....can you remember what happened?  
       06 Shirley. Mmm...

- [7] 06 Shirley. ....it was just a rock fell on her.  
 07 Teacher. Really.
- [8] 07 Teacher. ....What/
- [9] 08 Shirley. She was running away from it..  
 09 Teacher. I see...
- [10] 09 Teacher. ...and did...I mean....you know,  
 10 did...were you there when it happened?  
 11 Shirley. Mmm...
- [11] 11 Shirley. ...yes.  
 12 Teacher. Oh that must have been terrible.
- [12] 13 Teacher. Were you able to do anything or..  
 or not?  
 14 Shirley. No..
- [13] 14 Shirley. ....I just shouted and..  
 15 Teacher. Did you?  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 22-23)

49. When the adjacency pairs are presented in this way a rather different picture of what is going on emerges. We can see that many of Shirley's contributions analysed previously as second part utterances, are being treated by the teacher in role as first parts. When he responds to her contributions, as when he says,

'A close friend'	04
'Really'	07
'I see'	09
'Oh that must have been terrible'	12
'Did you?'	15

he gives them the status of first parts. The teacher in role is manipulating the structure in order to give Shirley the extra 'rights' (as a first part speaker) that she would enjoy as an 'expert' child dealing with an adult stranger. Shirley's contributions in lines 3, 6, 11 and 14 are responses to the teacher's questions, but they are also made into first parts by the responses he gives. In the following lines, for instance, he



acknowledges Shirley's contribution before asking the next question,

04 Teacher. A close friend. What happened? Do  
05 you....can you remember what happened?

07 Teacher. Really. What/

09 Teacher. I see.....and did...I mean....you know,  
10 did...were you there when it happened?

12 Teacher. Oh that must have been terrible. Were  
13 you able to do anything or..or not?  
(All from page 23 of the transcript)

50. By working in this way, Shirley's contributions are no longer simply seen as answers, but as answers followed by statements. We can see this happening in Shirley's response to the teacher's question in line 1 ('..was it a relation of yours or...'),

03 Shirley. No it was just a close friend. (p.23). In this contribution, 'No' (the answer), is followed by 'it was just a close friend' (the statement) to which the teacher in role is able to 'respond', 'A close friend'. The following 'responses' from Shirley also work in this way,

06 Shirley. Mmm...it was just a rock fell on her.

11 Shirley. Mmm.....yes.

14 Shirley. No, I just shouted and..  
And they never heard me.  
(All from page 23 of the transcript)

Once again we may see how the structure and rules of conversation are being used by those involved to put people in place and indicate relationships. Shirley is given status within the dramatic context even though she has not the knowledge and experience to command such a

position. The meaningfulness of the dramatic context is presented in part by the structure.

51. When we analyse the work done by Shirley and the teacher in role at this level of conversational structure, we can see that it would be unwise to treat this as a piece of 'unreal talk', and a mere copy of real conversation. It is just conversation, and the fact that it takes place within a make-believe context does not affect its meaningfulness nor the way in which it is made to seem meaningful. These people could not think about reproducing such complicated forms and structures, nor could they take care to use and follow rules which can only be uncovered by detailed analysis. It is not something which could be achieved by craft, and they give it no more thought than they would if they were producing these conversations in everyday life.

52. As the teacher in role uses the structure of the conversation to tell the child what to say and how to act, he is able to control both the 'academic task structure' and the 'social participation structure' whilst not appearing to do so. The teacher in role can manipulate a situation within which he is seen to occupy a subservient position. This has important implications for teaching through drama, and we shall return to them later (63). For the moment, though, we shall turn our attention to some of the ways in which language is used and words are presented by the teacher in role and by the children in order to contribute to the

meaningfulness of the dramatic context.

THE PRESENTATION OF WORDS IN ORDER TO ELABORATE CONTEXT.

1). The language of the teacher in role.

53. If we look at the way in which the teacher in role speaks during this short extract (p.22: 20 to p.23: 21 in the transcript, and para.25 in this chapter), we are likely to be impressed by two things. The first is the way in which he appears to be constantly searching for the right word or phrase. We have already referred to this(64), but it is interesting to see how he makes use of this practice in order to draw everyone's attention to the kind of situation they are engaged in presenting. He is still concerned to be looking for a suitable way to say something awkward and to indicate that this 'something' is likely, if introduced without sensitivity, to lead to distress. It is only in the light of this knowledge that what he actually comes to say has any meaning. So, when the teacher in role says,

01 Teacher. Well..you..you know was it a relation  
02 of yours or...

04 Teacher. Do  
05 you....can you remember what happened?

09 Teacher. ....and did...I mean....you know,  
10 did...were you there when it happened?  
(All from page 23 of the transcript),

he is not speaking awkwardly or badly (even though he may appear to be) and he is not a 'bad' actor searching for the right words (after all, he never finds them and seems quite happy to let what he says stand in the end). Rather, he is using his language to describe the kind of

relationship which exists between him and the child in order to make visible (and concrete) the situation in which they find themselves, and from within which they are engaged in their 'presenting'. It is not all that he does, as we have seen, but it is part of what he does to show how Shirley should take his words. It is part of the way in which he 'tells' her how to respond. He hardly manages to say anything in this extract without hesitating or attempting some kind of reformulation, yet heard within the context of the dramatic situation, he does not appear to be inarticulate. Indeed, the pauses and the corrections are part of the business of articulating the context. It is interesting to see by way of contrast, how assured and precisely phrased is the language of the child, and that confidence reflects and elaborates her role in the situation just as surely as the teacher's verbal irregularities serve to illuminate his position. She is one of those who is expert, knows what she is about, and he is still, as a stranger, finding his way. Their roles are presented through their use of language. It is work of this kind which helps to make the context familiar and meaningful to those taking part and to outside observers. It is not what they say, but the way that they say it. It is part of the business of putting people in place and elaborating the context.

54. The second thing that is likely to impress us about the contributions of the teacher in role, is the

way in which he supports the child's authority within the dramatic situation by accepting without question everything she says. In doing so, he demonstrates his appreciation of her position as well as his own, and reinforces her role as that of child expert. He acknowledges her contributions and he goes far beyond the necessary 'back-channelling' required in order that a conversation may keep going. Sometimes, for instance, he repeats what Shirley has said ('A close friend', p.23: 04) and sometimes he comments upon it ('Really', p.23: 07 and 'Oh that must have been terrible', p.23: 12), but he never ignores it. He is concerned to give the extra 'status' that must be accorded to her words, and whilst these acknowledgements serve to bind the conversation into a unified whole, they also demonstrate to the child that she has the adult's attention, his interest and support, and that she is entitled to 'keep going'.

55. This kind of 'formulating' was talked of earlier as we looked at the teacher introducing the topic of the discussion(65), and here we may see it working in the same way. These 'acknowledgements' serve, for instance, to keep track of the conversation and its content, and they help to provide a sense of shared understanding. At the same time, they instil amongst those involved a respect for a particular version of the encounter, and a feeling of 'this is how it was'. Finally, they have implications for further action and for the way in which

the conversation should develop. Formulations such as these are a part of all conversational exchanges, and their appearance here points to the everyday nature of the conversation even though it may be treated as a piece of make-believe.

56. We may appreciate by now, that whilst the teacher's use of language describes his role as 'protective adult stranger', it also acts as a constant indicator of the attitude that Shirley and the others should take. In the same way, the contributions which the children make through the drama work to illuminate the teacher's role. So, whilst the meaningfulness of the drama comes of the language and actions within a particular context, that context is elaborated continuously by the ways in which they talk and act. Their activities are in and about the situations they serve to describe and it is not what they bring to the conversation, but what they make of it which counts.

## 2). The language of the child in role.

57. We have seen how Shirley speaks with precision and authority and how this indicates the kind of confidence expected in someone who is recounting 'real' events and talking out of her experience. We have seen how she does the right things in order to 'pass' as one who knows(66). She knows what she is talking about as she gives the impression that she knows what she is talking about. It is part of what she has to do in order to make her place within the dramatic situation clear.

This may be more important than what she is actually talking about (rocks falling on heads, stuff of this kind) which, in a sense, serves to keep us talking and involved and works to add a some 'colour' to our lives. We have to keep talking about something in order to keep the situation going, but clearly Shirley could have described quite a different kind of 'volcano accident' and yet still presented a dramatic situation which could be called 'protective adult stranger and distressed child'. It is not that what we say does not matter, but that the way in which we say it, and the way in which we contribute to the 'social participation structure', may be of greater significance when we are concerned with the meaningfulness of the social life. We have only to remember the plight of Ian, who knew what he was talking about but not how to talk about it and who, as a consequence, had his contributions treated as though they were inappropriate. They did not, as it were, arrive in that state, but were seen to be inappropriate through the ways in which his words were dealt with by the others. In this way they were 'coped with' as they were shown to be inappropriate(67).

58. We have seen how the teacher in role uses the structure of the conversation and the child's knowledge of that structure to indicate the nature of the situation they are engaged in creating, and it is interesting to see how Shirley lets the 'stranger' guide her through the experience by the way he questions her

and responds to her answers. If you listen to the taped recording of the drama, you will feel the force of her narrative which seems to drive onwards in spite of his contributions, and yet underneath this you may hear her respond to his guidance. She is dependent upon him, and yet she gives the impression that she is dealing with knowledge beyond his experience. It is these two strands, that of 'expert' and that of 'child in need of protection', that are so successfully managed and presented in this extract. It is not possible to separate the work of the teacher in role from that of the child, for they depend upon each other to make the situation meaningful. It is then up to others (people who read and comment upon the transcript, for instance) to treat it as meaningful and then work to find it so.

59. The teacher in role as the stranger, for instance, is able to guide Shirley through 'her experience' by his use of the adult stranger role which enables him to question her even as he 'protects' her. In this way, and from within the role, he can influence the nature of the experience with which she is involved. Even so, he is constrained by the dramatic situation, for he cannot move beyond the 'social participation structure' which describes the drama, and this keeps him admirably 'in touch' with the children he is teaching and the situation they are creating together. We shall come to see the full force of this as the analysis of the drama proceeds, but we should be in a position to appreciate



how all the contributors are mindful of the situation to which they contribute. All of them have to act and react appropriately, according to the context which they develop about them, and so it is quite possible to see, as we do here, the young child contradicting and interrupting the teacher in role, and though he may guide her and point the way, he cannot disagree with the route she chooses to take for so long as she manages to contribute 'properly'. They are bound together. If the teacher fails to see this, his drama will waste away. The dramatic situation is rather more than the contributions of those involved, and all are bound by it.

60. We can see, as well, how the dramatic situation prevents Shirley from going into details about her friend's accident. The teacher in role and the child both know that it would be inappropriate to have Shirley talk intimately of the things she had seen and experienced. She knows he could not 'press her for details' and she is aware, as he is, that the child must be seen to be protected if the situation is to 'feel right'(68). We may appreciate from this, that contributions are 'recipient designed' in a wider sense than that developed within turn taking. They do not simply take account of other contributions as they are made, but also of the overall and developing context of which they are a part. Contributions are appropriate, and they are appropriate as they are made meaningful

within a context which they serve to elaborate(69). All that Shirley has to do, and all that the teacher asks her to do, is provide brief descriptions which can stand as a 'document of' an experience about which she is speaking and to which the teacher in role can give a value ('Really', p.23: 07, 'Oh that must have been terrible' p.23: 12). They know what they are doing, these two, and they know what they have to do.

61. In the end I find this situation understandable. I understand what is happening because the people involved have shown me (as they have shown each other) the kind of people they are, the relationship that exists between them and the sort of situation in which they seem to find themselves. All of these things are elaborated through their talk and actions which are given meaning as they are related to the context of people, relationships and settings. I can 'fill in' the details of all this because their use of language 'indicates' how I should take their meaning and how I should understand. It still makes no sense to ask, "What does it mean?", but it is good to see some of the methods and practices by which it is made meaningful. At no time does Shirley 'tell us' what she is going to do; she just gets on and does it. If you want to see what she does, you have to look at the way she uses her talk and the way that she acts. Her 'meaning' is bound up with what she does. There is not some essential meaning behind her words which they are trying to

express, but rather a situation managed in such a way that we find it familiar and within which we feel we could act properly. We know enough to know what counts as a proper contribution(70).

62. Finally, and in spite of the way the teacher in role seems to be protecting Shirley from the consequences of her by volcano dwelling, it is possible to sense a deep feeling for the occasion, and the awful outcome, 'I just shouted and..and they never heard me' (p.23: 14-16), draws us to levels of experience beyond anything we might expect from a classroom discussion. Such an outcry, such an outcome, was drawn from the dramatic situation they created together. It was unlooked for, but it was 'inevitable' in the sense that we can now look back and see how it was managed, how it came about. We can explain it as we can explain our everyday experience. We can show that it happened, but we can also show how it happened.

63. It would be interesting to consider the way in which this piece of drama might be handled as a topic for an informal classroom discussion of the kind examined earlier(71). We only have to think of the sort of questions likely to be asked ('What would it be like to have a friend killed by a volcano?', 'What might have happened to them?', 'What do you think you would have done?', etc.) in order to imagine the kind of answers they would draw from eight year-old children. Surely, Shirley's response is of a different order ('I just

shouted and..and they never heard me') for it is drawn out of the dramatic context and is a part of that context. She can talk in this way because the social reality they have constructed is tied necessarily to their concerns (adult stranger and distressed child) and not 'grafted on' to the classroom reality of teachers and pupils. This may be the unique gift of drama, and if we look back at the words they use and the way in which they use them, we could not but think that the situation was 'real'. We have to know it is drama in order to see it as the transcript of a piece of drama. Shirley, after all, makes no mistakes and one is inclined to wonder how this could be, for she is not very old and by no means a skilled actor. The answer, it would seem, is that she is not 'weighed down' by the business of acting a part, which is a difficult and demanding activity conducted within the everyday experience. She is not expected to 'realise a meaning' which is already, in some way, predetermined. Instead she is allowed and encouraged simply to work within the make-believe experience, as she would work within the everyday social life. She collaborates in the business of making the dramatic situation visible as she goes along. She discovers what she has done and what is happening as it happens. She does not do what she has already thought about or been told to do. She is perceptive and attentive to the context and she can 'read' the contextual cues which are manifested across

many levels of organisation of speech and non-verbal behaviour(72). She understands what has to be done in order to manage a conversation. She can act appropriately. Later, of course, and with some encouragement and a copy of the transcript, she may be able to see how it was done.

64. We have tried to do this here, and we have deliberately avoided looking at the words which have been used as if they were bearers of meaning. By treating the words as not being meaningful in themselves, we have managed to concentrate upon the way in which they are used to contribute to the meaningfulness of situations (whether they are treated as make-believe or everyday experiences). Such an approach should serve to convince us that the meaning does not come simply with words that find their value elsewhere (as they describe or connect with a real world, for example) but through a complex and subtle attention to, and regard for, that which is going on now. The words do not speak for themselves but as they are managed and used. This management takes place within contexts of their use, and meaningfulness is produced as situations are presented and made visible.

65. It is a shame that the transcript captures only a small part of the work which goes on as people attend to the business of making the social life appear real in their everyday and make-believe experience. We are left to guess at what else is happening. Nevertheless, as we

shall see, it is possible to make a very good guess from the information to hand(73). We can also look at rather more than the structure and use of language in conversational exchanges, and we shall now broaden the approach in order to see how individuals are given stability, how relationships are described and how settings are elaborated by the things which people say and do, as well as by the ways in which they say and do them.

## Chapter Six.

### PUTTING PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACE AND ELABORATING THE CONTEXT.

1. We shall now attend to the main part of the drama, that we may see how it is presented and made visible(1). We shall take nothing for granted, neither the characters, their relationships nor the setting, but look only at what is done by those involved that we may see them prepare the stranger for his climb up the volcano.

### TELLING IT THE WAY IT IS.

2. Every contribution to a conversational exchange serves to 'put people in their place'. Every contribution serves to elaborate the context. Every utterance and action is bound to do this, and we cannot help but present the situation within which we speak(2). As we have already seen, language is only rarely used directly to elaborate the setting (a teacher starting a lesson, for instance, or a drama teacher 'getting drama going'), and even when attempts are made to tell people how to behave they do not always work as we would want(3). We cannot simply tell people what we want them to do, and then leave it at that, for it has to be done if it is to be done. We cannot tell them which way we want them to take our meaning, and then expect them to get our meaning in that way.

3. We might imagine, for instance, someone who always talked like this and who always, and deliberately, tried

to make his meaning plain so that he should not be misunderstood. Perhaps he would preface his remarks like this, "Now, I'll be perfectly honest with you", or "Now I'm going to make you a promise", or "Now I'm going to be sarcastic", and so on. Usually, though, people do not try to help us to understand what they are saying in this manner, and so when someone does say, "Now, I'm going to be perfectly honest with you", we are likely to prick up our ears and be extra attentive to that which is going on(4). Indeed, we might be made suspicious by such a remark and treat it as a prelude to a clear piece of dishonesty. On the other hand we might take it as a special favour from one who does not usually take people into his confidence. The point is, that on those occasions when someone attempts to tell us in so many words how we are to take their meaning, there is absolutely no compulsion upon us to take it in that way. We are free to interpret his remark ("Now, I'll be perfectly honest with you") as meaning he is going to be perfectly honest with us, or else, he is not going to be perfectly honest with us. This is not to imply, of course, that it does not matter which way we take it, but that this act by the speaker in attempting to tell us directly how we should take his remarks does not compel us to take them that way. We will attend to other aspects of the situation within which he speaks, and his 'instructions' will be heard within context as well. So although the statement appears to be telling



us about the way in which we should attend to the remarks which follow, it actually does nothing of the kind or, at least, not in the direct way that we might think. We cannot make our words or meaning plain simply by 'telling it the way it is', and the fact that someone appears to be trying to do so should only serve to put us on our toes. Such statements tell us not about the words which follow but about the context in which we should find them meaningful. They might have the opposite effect to that which was intended(5).

4. We could imagine a doctor, for instance, prefacing a diagnosis with the words, "Now, I'll be perfectly honest with you". Clearly we would not want to suggest that until that time the relationship between the doctor and the patient had been characterised by dishonesty. The words are being used here for quite a different purpose (perhaps to imply the significance of the forthcoming diagnosis, perhaps to stress the bond between doctor and patient, perhaps to prepare the patient for bad news, and so on), and the way we are to take his words can only be determined by the way in which we are able to locate them within a setting. Such a setting would consist of our knowledge of doctors' surgeries, relationships between doctors and patients, the patient's knowledge of this particular doctor, their attitudes towards each other, the development of the present conversation, and a host of things of this kind. Not surprisingly, we would be inclined to take the same

remark ('Now, I'll be perfectly honest with you') in rather a different way when used by, say, a second-hand car salesman. In both cases, though, the taking of 'meaning' out of language is a 'managed accomplishment' and we have to work in collaboration with others (the doctor, for instance, or the second-hand car salesman) in order to build a context within which the words that are used may be made meaningful. I cannot tell you how to take my meaning, I can only show you what I mean. It is then up to you to find my meaning as you make sense of what I say and do.

5. Now, whilst it is the case that people do sometimes preface their remarks in this way, ordinarily they do not for they just get on with the business of being honest or dishonest, asking questions, making promises and so on, and all without any attempt to explain what they are about. Indeed, if we tried seriously to explain what we meant in this way, we should fall into the trap of needing another explanation to explain what we meant by explaining what we meant(6). There would be no end to the explanations. So, instead of simply throwing words at one another in a vain attempt to convince, we are forced to fall back upon the negotiation of meaning. Instead of trying to 'pass on' through a language of 'inherently meaningful words' (in which a statement like 'Now I'll be perfectly honest with you' can and must mean only one thing and for all time and upon all occasions) a picture of a 'world out

there' which is fixed and true, we just get on with the business of using these words and making sense of them through our use. It is not that words are meaning-less but that they are not meaning-ful. We construct settings within which the words work, so that we may see what we are doing and what we 'mean'. This we have to do in order to make the social life visible and it is to activities of this kind that we shall address our attention now.

CONTRIBUTIONS SERVE TO PUT PEOPLE IN PLACE.

6. The opening lines of the third section of the transcript enable us to see how contributions to conversational exchanges serve to elaborate the context within which they make sense.

01 Teacher.	I'm ever so nervous about this you know.		
02 Shirley.	When/		
03 Bev.	There's no need to be.		
04 Teacher.	We've been waiting	Mark.	What is it?
05	a long time.	Julia.	Great
06 Shirley.	Yes, I know. But		Priest, a
07	when you go in/		man wishes
08 Teacher.	Yeah/		to see you.
09 Shirley.	stand in the	Mark.	Is that the
10	middle of us.		new man we
11 Teacher.	Between you two?		have seen in
12 Shirley.	Yeah.		the village?
13 Bev.	Because they get/	Julia.	Yes, Priest
14 Shirley.	Quite		Silver.
15	angry/	Mark.	Tell him we
16 Bev.	quite angry.		will see him
17	And you must bow.		now.
18 Teacher.	Really? Look...	Julia.	Thank you.
19	are you...will you		
20	...when you bow,		
21	do I bow then?		
22 Shirley.	Well, after us.		
23 Bev.	After us/		
24 Teacher.	After you.		
25 Shirley.	Yeah.		

(Extract from the transcript, page 31)

7. Some of the basic themes of the drama (for example, strangers and group members, leadership and responsibility for action, the relationships between strangers and insiders, between priests and supplicants, etc.) are all presented within the first few lines(7). Every word counts, and if it does not then it is made to count(8).

8. So, when the teacher in role as the stranger addresses the children, he does so as an adult who has certain rights, for instance, the right to initiate exchanges(9). However, at the same time, through the words that he uses ('I'm ever so nervous...', p.31: 01), he draws attention to his inferior status as an outsider who does not know what to expect nor what is required of him. The ambivalence of his position is demonstrated in this opening line, and through that we begin to see his relationship with the children who are to be his guides and the priests whom they serve. They are not simply set going but kept going, and the children have to respond in such a way as to further define the relationship. One of the ways in which they achieve this is by telling him what he should do.

02 Shirley. When/

06 Shirley. But

07 when you go in/

09 Shirley. stand in the

10 middle of us.

17 Bev. And you must bow.

(Examples from page 31 of the transcript).

They also offer him reassurance and comfort,

'There's no need to be [nervous]' (p.31: 03), and they do so as they take time and care to help him. All of these responses serve to put the stranger and the children in their places; they show us who they are. The teacher in role as the stranger continues the work by showing how they (these children and the stranger) stand in relation to the priests,

04 Teacher. We've been waiting a long time. They are the ones who have to wait, and it is the priests for whom they must wait.

9. And so it goes on, for thereafter and throughout the drama the children and the teacher in role continually present their relationships (and the changes which take place, sometimes subtle and sometimes quite dramatic) to themselves and to each other. They keep them always before us, that we might know where we are and what is happening. Indeed, this business of 'putting people in their place', may be the core activity in the meaning making process, and this whether we are concerned to present everyday or make-believe experience. Further, if any 'contribution' fails to work in this way and cannot be made to work in this way then it will be treated as nonsense and disregarded. We have only to think of Ian's struggles to feel the force of this point(10).

10. Every contribution, as it draws our attention to significant aspects of the situation(11), serves to give a sense of stability to the social life and enables us

to feel that we are living through a 'shared in common' experience. Without this faith we could not begin to treat the world as a sensible place, and would not even attempt to make it meaningful. At the same time, though, each contribution redefines the situation, shifts the 'meaning' it has for those involved, gives it a kind of 'personal edge' and the feeling that we can impress our point of view upon the world and make our mark. We feel that we share a common experience but that it is changed by our presence. We feel, too, that though we are party to a common experience, we see it differently and from our own point of view. There is, we feel, at any one time a basic 'truth' about a situation, a real state of affairs. There is 'the way things are'. Our failure to agree about essential 'meaning', and our inability to describe it, is explained by showing that we have disparate points of view and an inadequate appreciation of what is going on. There is more to life than we can see, but we do not doubt that the social life exists had we the wit to see it. Indeed, we must not doubt, we must hold hard to this notion of a basic 'reality', for if we stopped believing we would also stop making sense of our lives. It is not so easy to appreciate that we may find the world to be meaningful because we treat it as meaningful and because we try to make sense of what is going on (12).

11. Once again, we may feel the reflexive force within

social experience. We find the world is 'real' because we treat it as real, and we treat it as real for that is the way we seem to find it. So it is when we look at conversational exchanges in which significant situations are generated through speech and actions which are interpreted and found sensible only in those situations they serve to describe. When Shirley says,

'Yes, I know. But when you go in....stand  
in the middle of us.' (p.31: 6-10), she tells us,

in the way that she speaks, of the relationship between the stranger and the 'by-volcano dwelling' children. She tells us about the context. The meaning of her words can only be uncovered as we take account of the context within which they were uttered and which they serve to describe. There is no need to search for the meaning of words beyond the work done to make them meaningful. This is as true of our everyday, as of our make-believe, experience, and not only do the children show the teacher in role how to behave as a stranger (as they treat him as a stranger), they also show him what it is to be a stranger:

20 Teacher ...when you bow,  
21 do I bow then?  
22 Shirley. Well, after us.  
23 Bev. After us/  
24 Teacher. After you.  
25 Shirley. Yeah.  
(Extract from the transcript, page 31).

These people are not simply doing drama about strangers and group members; they are busy creating strangers and group members as they are created and brought to our

notice within our day to day lives. It is not the case that when we are presenting experience dramatically we have to decide what we will be and then go on to act that part. Rather, our words and actions make us what we are, and we find out what that is even as we speak. All that we need is a kind of 'shove' to get us going, a sign to show us where we are(13).

04 Mark.       What is it?  
 05 Julia.       [She enters their part of the room and  
                   kneels before him]  
                   Great  
 06               Priest, a  
 07               man wishes  
 08               to see you.  
 09 Mark.       Is that the  
 10               new man we  
 11               have seen in  
 12               the village?  
 13 Julia.       Yes, Priest  
 14               Silver.  
 15 Mark.       Tell him we  
 16               will see him  
 17               now.  
 18 Julia.       Thank you.  
                   [She bows low, stands and leaves the  
                   priests' part of the room]  
                   (Extract from the transcript, page 31)

12. This piece of drama, which runs concurrently with that which we have been looking at, is particularly interesting. Once again, the inequality of 'rights' which exists between the priests and the children, underlines and makes sensible their words and actions. So, we can see the child coming to the priest and kneeling before him, the deference she shows in her use of titles, the priest's terse questioning ('What is it?') and his use of commands ('Tell him...'), and we can appreciate how these extra rights are made manifest



through the words and actions of those involved in the interaction. However, beyond this, we may notice that this piece of dialogue displays a kind of formalised structure. It is ordered, precise and it seems complete. It reads rather like a simple but carefully crafted play. By looking at this extract beside the lines of speech from the main part of the drama, we should see that there are none of the 'irregularities, interruptions and inconsequentialities' which are characteristic of desultory conversation and seem to pervade other parts of the transcript. It is as if these children (Julia and Mark) were deliberately and carefully trying to reproduce and present a situation with which they were already familiar; as if they were trying to take a chunk of 'real' life and reproduce it; as if they were 'doing drama'. They think about what they are saying here in a way that those engaged in creating everyday social experience do not. It is deliberate and considered, and they do not simply get on and do it. There is not here that natural tension which we feel in everyday life as our experience is managed from moment to moment, for here there is no direct negotiating to be done. The priest and his supplicant know beforehand exactly how they have to behave in the other's presence. They are recreating a situation which has been played many times before, for they are involved in presenting a highly institutionalised activity(14).

13. A piece of dialogue such as we have here, could

not be mistaken for an example of everyday language, for it has a heightened quality and a formal structure (as each says his piece and waits her turn) which is of another order. However, its use here is appropriate, for in producing a situation which may be seen as 'priests and supplicants', the words and actions which they use must be embedded in the established and traditional forms of religious ceremony. They are presenting here a piece of theatre and that, as these people 'know', is a different kind of activity from creating members and strangers. It is not the same as managing and negotiating a form of life. They are presenting a situation in which the roles of priest and supplicant are already carefully defined and established by tradition. The meaning has, in a sense, been institutionalised, and they can 'lift it off the shelf' and simply take it for their drama(15).

14. It seems a pity, but sometimes drama is concerned to present life in this way, as though it were a kind of pageant which could be taken and presented by copying certain words and actions(16). This seems to happen even when the drama is dealing with aspects of our everyday experience which have to be negotiated again and again, and which cannot be passed on as if they were packets of ready made meanings. When life is treated in this way, the drama that results can quickly become a lifeless activity, and a pale shadow of that which it purports to represent. Everyday life and experience is

not a ceremony, and it is not a well-made play. People do not know what is going to happen next and they do not learn lines. Rather, they get together and make it work. Drama should not be detached from this process. This is not because life is not like that (though it is not like that), but rather because it takes from the dramatic situation those sense making activities by which our life (and our drama) is made meaningful. Drama should not present life as though it were a pageant, unless of course, as in this case, it is drama dealing with ceremony or ritual(17).

15. It is interesting as well, to see how the children in role as priests only draw upon this formalised, traditional language when they are creating a context within which the priests are engaged in 'priestly' activities. A little later in the drama these same priests, talking amongst themselves, produce this piece of dialogue,

(p.31)

17 Mark. He's taking  
18 a long time,  
19 isn't he?  
20 Ian. Yes.  
21 Mark. Wait a  
22 minute...ah,  
23 they're  
24 telling him  
25 what to do.  
26 Peter. They're  
27 chatting him  
28 up.

(p.32)

29 Mark. No, they're  
01 not chatting  
02 him up.....  
03 [four second  
04 pause]

05 Peter. We walk out.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 31-32).

The language between priest and priest when they are not being priestly, and are no longer engaged with the supplicants, is quite different. It is chatty and informal, and this short extract should be enough to remind us that even priests must negotiate their own reality when they are not bound by the ceremonies through which so much of their lives are made visible (18). We should also be able to appreciate, from the way these children handle the language, that the language itself creates the relationships as surely as the relationships demand the use of appropriate language.

16. Now we may return to the transcript in order to see some of the ways in which the children make use of their language to present the stranger and put him in place. We shall see that it is not enough for the teacher to step into role, for he must be kept there. Furthermore, he cannot manage this alone.

			(p.31)
25		Ian.	***** sit
26	Teacher.	Right, can we	down and
27		just try that	cross our
28		quickly?	legs.
29		Would you just	Mark. Lets go and
			(p.32)
01	Teacher.	show me....what	Mark. wait in
02		you're going to	here.
03		do?	Peter. This is the
04	Shirley.	Right. Well	closed off
05		walk over there.	room.
06	Teacher.	Yeah.	
07	Shirley.	And you get in the middle.	
08	Teacher.	Wh..where do I stand? Here?	
09	Shirley.	Yeah.	
10	Bev.	You stand in the middle.	

11 Teacher. Well where are you going to stand?  
 12 Bev. Yes..we're (going to stand here.  
 13 Teacher. (Yes, I see, yes. Now what  
 14 do I do?  
 15 Shirley. You just..you just walk.  
 16 Teacher. Yes.  
 17 Shirley. And then we'll Mark. He's taking  
 18 go/ a long time,  
 19 Teacher. Yes/ isn't he?  
 20 Shirley. like that. Ian. Yes.  
 21 Teacher. Yes. Mark. Wait a  
 22 Shirley. And they when minute...ah,  
 23 we're up you go they're  
 24 down. telling him  
 25 Teacher. I go down then. what to do.  
 26 Bev. Then you sit down. Peter. They're  
 27 Teacher. I've got it. OK. chatting him  
 28 Shirley. Right. up.  
 29 Teacher. Right. Mark. No, they're  
 (p.33)  
 01 Julia. The priest wishes Mark. not chatting  
 02 to see you now. him up.....  
 03 Teacher. Thank you. Am I [four second  
 04 all right? pause]  
 05 All. Yes. Peter. We walk out.  
 06 Teacher. My shoes aren't  
 07 very clean are they?  
 08 Bev. Oh it doesn't matter.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 31-33)

17. There may be no end to the list of strategies  
 employed to present a stranger, for there is only the  
 uncovering of what is done in situations where strangers  
 are made. Here, though, are some of the practices by  
 which these children manage to elaborate the teacher's  
 'strangerness'.

[1]. They develop a sense of unity amongst themselves.

This serves, as well, to cast the teacher in  
 role as an outsider. They do this by the use of  
 pronouns as they talk amongst themselves as 'we' and  
 'us', and as they refer to the stranger as 'you'.  
 Later, we shall see them naming one another, but the  
 teacher in role is always 'you'. He is kept outside

and at a distance.

They also build up this sense of group identity by developing and reinforcing each other's contribution,

13 Bev. Because they get/  
14 Shirley. Quite  
15 angry/  
16 Bev. quite angry. (p.31). Sometimes they

even repeat one another,

09 Shirley. stand in the  
10 middle of us. (p.31).

07 Shirley. And you get in the middle. (p.32).  
10 Bev. You stand in the middle. (p.32), and then

a little later,

22 Shirley. Well, after us.  
23 Bev. After us/  
24 Teacher. After you. (p.31). All of this serves

to show that they are in agreement, and it is part of the work done to build up the group membership by which the teacher may appear as a stranger.

[2]. They seek to reassure the teacher in role.

In doing this, they point to his need for reassurance and hence to his vulnerability. Beverley is particularly comforting,

01 Teacher. I'm ever so nervous about this you know.  
03 Bev. There's no need to be. (p.31), and then

again, a little later,

06 Teacher. My shoes aren't  
07 very clean are they?  
08 Bev. Oh it doesn't matter. (p.33).

[3]. They display members' knowledge.

This works to highlight his ignorance and makes him more aware of his 'strangeness'.

13 Bev. Because they [the priests] get/  
14 Shirley. Quite

15                   angry.  
17 Bev.           And you must bow. (p.31). When Julia

says,

'The priest wishes to see you now' (p.33: 01), she is also demonstrating her knowledge of the situation and his need to learn. Indeed, all of the 'teaching' they undertake in this extract (getting the stranger to bow and stand properly, to realise when he has to sit, etc.) serves in this business of displaying members' knowledge (19).

[4]. They take charge of him.

They control and organise him, so that he may act properly, so that he may behave like them. They show him to be inadequate and in need of teaching. They put him in place by showing him he is out of place.

'But when you go in...stand in the middle of us.' (p.31: 6-10).

'Right. Well walk over there...and you get in the middle.' (p.32: 4-7). They teach him what to do, and through their teaching take for themselves the extra rights of a teacher in a teaching situation. They then draw upon these rights.

[5]. They continually evaluate his progress.

Teachers can do this, and it is part of the typical three-part exchange (initiation, response, evaluation), and people who do this are seen to be teaching. There are those who know, and those who do not know and the teacher in role is made to look like a stranger.

11 Teacher. Between you two?  
12 Shirley. Yeah. (p.31).  
03 Teacher. Am I

04 all right?  
05 All. Yes. (p.33).

[6]. They 'play down' his contributions.

They do not ask too much of him, for he is a stranger and unused to their ways. They make allowances for him as they try to build his confidence,

15 Shirley. You just..you just walk. (p.32).

18. Now these activities are ways of keeping the teacher in role as the stranger. The list is not exhaustive, and you may find more in just this short extract from the transcript. Indeed, they will be there for so long as we can 'see' the stranger, and every action and contribution will serve to illuminate this quality of 'strangerness'. Take a passage, any passage, and see what is done that the teacher might appear in role as a stranger.

19. We should not forget that this business of 'meaning-making' is a collaborative activity and many of the children's strategies are 'drawn from' them by the teacher. He invites them to treat him this way. He talks, for instance, of 'you' as he addresses the whole group, and he sets them against himself as he speaks of 'I'. He also encourages them to take the lead, that he might follow,

20 Teacher. ...when you bow,  
21 do I bow then? (p.31), and again a few

moments later,

29 Teacher. Would you just  
01 show me....what  
02 you're going to  
03 do? (p.31-32). He gets



them to work as teachers not by telling them to do so, but by getting them to respond as teachers. He works through his role in the drama. Indeed, nearly every contribution which the teacher makes in this extract seems to work in this way. He asks so many questions, and these questions are designed not only to get information, but also to get the group to do something, to show them what he wants of them and what they have to do if they are to present experience dramatically. So, it is the teacher in role who encourages the children to evaluate his performance;

26 Teacher. Right, can we  
27 just try that  
28 quickly? (p.31), and then a little

later,

03 Teacher. Am I  
04 all right? (p.33). He demeans

himself in their eyes that he may be seen as inadequate, as he speaks of his nervousness and his dirty shoes. He 'asks' for reassurance from the children, and this is what he gets. In the same way, he encourages these children to display members' knowledge by drawing their attention to his ignorance and by seeking their advice. At every turn they are involved, and it seems they cannot escape this involvement.

20. When we look at a piece of dialogue in this way, we may appreciate the complex and subtle nature of the connections between the contributions by which the dramatic experience is made visible. Certainly they are

not the kind of connections which could be made artfully, and by 'child actors'. In some ways, they produce too hard a knot for us to untie, let alone reproduce. However, there are several points that could be usefully be made:

[1]. Every contribution serves to elaborate the setting within which it makes sense. If it did not do so, it would lack currency and would have to be treated as inadequate or else made appropriate. We make contributions appropriate as we make them appear sensible(20).

[2]. Contributions serve not only to show us the speaker and his point of view, but also to put others in place as well. Clearly this is the case here, where the concept of 'stranger' only exists by reference to 'group members'. But think, too, of the priests and their supplicants, and consider teachers and pupils, shop assistants and their customers, the police and law breakers, doctors and patients, parents and children, men and women, old and young; we could go on and on(21).

[3]. The generation of meaningful situations is a collaborative activity, in which contributions have to be made with sensitivity and in the light of developing experience.

[4]. Nevertheless, it is possible for one or more of the contributors to have a disproportionate influence upon the situation, and even dominate the

making of meaning. This is happening here, where the teacher, through the structure of the conversation and through the things which he says and in the way that he says them, 'directs' from within. However, though he may dominate, he cannot do as he pleases. Each participant must contribute properly, and a proper contribution is an aspect of the dramatic presentation of experience. It is this which ensures that the participants keep in touch with one another and with what is going on.

21. Another way to uncover the kind of work done by the teacher in role and the children in making this situation visible, is to ask how we can tell by looking at the transcript which of the people involved are, say, priests. It should be clear by now that they cannot be told at the start, 'you are priests' and then left with this label about them to become priests and remain so until the drama is over. It is more than simply a matter of handing out parts, and though we may be set going it is still up to us to keep going(22). The priests have to demonstrate continuously their 'priestliness', and if we are determined not to take this attribute for granted (as if they were simply told to be priests and, hey presto, they became priests), then we should be able to see how it is done.

22. In fact, the priests are busy being priestly over several pages of the transcript, but let us just take one page and look at some of the things the children and

their teacher have to do so that we may see some of the participants as priests.

(p.33)

20 Mark. What is your name?  
 21 Teacher. I haven't bowed yet. I'm waiting  
 22 for you to bow. Do I bow?  
 23 Julia. Yes, bow.  
 24 Teacher. Um..er..Peter, O Great Priest.  
 25 Mark. Take your shoes off.  
 26 Teacher. My shoes? Is that right?  
 27 Julia. Yes, your shoes.  
 28 Teacher. There you are, O Great Priest.  
 29 Ian. You may sit down, (Peter.

(p.34)

01 Teacher. (Thank you. Thank you  
 02 Great Priest. Who's that?  
 03 Julia. Great Priest Gold.  
 04 Teacher. Gold. Thank you Great Priest Gold.  
 05 Ian. You may sit down, great servants.  
 06 Mark. Where do you come from?  
 07 Teacher. I come from England, O Great Priest.  
 08 Peter. And where's that?  
 09 Teacher. It...it's right across the oceans....  
 10 miles and miles away, Great Priest  
 11 Diamonds.  
 12 Ian. Wh..where's it near to?  
 13 Teacher. It's...it's part of Europe.  
 14 Mark. Does it worship the same god as us?  
 15 Teacher. Well...several different gods are  
 16 worshipped by different people really.  
 17 But..um..I think it's probably quite  
 18 similar, the god. But we don't have a  
 19 god on top of the mountain like I think  
 20 you have here.  
 21 [the priests turn away for a discussion]  
 22 Teacher. What have I said? I've upset them.  
 23 They don't like that.  
 24 Shirley. No you haven't.  
 25 Julia. (No.  
 26 Teacher. (Well why are they (turning away?  
 27 Julia. (They're just having  
 28 a discussion. They're discussing it.  
 29 Teacher. Are they? Am I doing all right?  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 33-34)

23. The first thing to appreciate is that we have an 'expectation of priests'. Everyone has this. The teacher and the pupils who sorted out roles beforehand, the stranger and the 'by-volcano dwelling' children who have already prepared for this meeting, and you, coming

to this piece for the first time and guided into an understanding of what is to happen by me. Even someone picking up the transcript by accident, would soon be aware that he had some priests on his hands as he noted the titles offered by the other players and the 'stage direction' in line 21 on page 34. This means that we interpret the things they say and do in the light of the actors being priests. In this sense, labels do count; only they count through our experience of what they signify drawn from other places and other times, and they lose currency if they are not seen to count. With this in mind let us now see what they do to uphold this priestly role.

24. The first thing we might notice is that the priests dominate the questioning:

'What is your name?'	(p.33: 20)
'Where do you come from?'	(p.34: 06)
'And where's that?'	(p.34: 08)
'Wh..where's it near to?'	(p.34: 12)
'Does it worship the same god as us?'	(p.34: 14).

The priests initiate, and the others are left to respond, and by working in this way they draw attention to the extra 'rights' the situation affords them. It is also significant that they engage in only minimal responses. In fact, they hardly respond at all and the others do not expect them to. The priests just seem to carry on regardless of the answers they receive to their questions.

20 Mark.	What is your name?	
24 Teacher.	Um..er..Peter, O Great Priest.	
25 Mark.	Take your shoes off.	(p.33). This

exchange is characteristic of those which occur between the priests and the others, and points clearly to the kind of relationship which exists between them. It is unsettling and disconcerting for those who receive treatment of this kind, and even when the priests do seem to be interested in what is said (as when, between lines 6 and 14, they try to get the stranger to be more precise about the geographical position of England), their only response is in the form of another question. They refuse, from their exalted position, to be drawn on any subject. This preserves their status and also hints at the kind of knowledge through which they have their power, the strict laws of which they are the guardians and interpreters and which, by their nature (delivered from on high), brook no discussion or compromise. They deal in pronouncements. To them, the meaning of life may be given; they deal with the words of their gods.

25. So the priests are never 'lost for words'.

Whenever they feel unsure of themselves and what is expected of them, they simply terminate the exchange. The children and the stranger are left to wait (which, because of their position, they are bound to do) and the priests go into a private discussion of their own in order to sustain their roles,

18 Teacher.	But we don't have a
19	god on top of the mountain like I think
20	you have here.
21	[the priests turn away for a discussion]
22 Teacher.	What have I said? I've upset them.
23	They don't like that.
24 Shirley.	No you haven't. (p.34). Not only

does this kind of activity preserve and enhance their reputation and dignity, it also has (as the teacher in role felt acutely) a disarming effect upon the others. They feel the power of these priests who can terminate the discussion at will, and then take it up again when they are ready. It works well, and the priests make use of this strategy on several occasions (see, for instance, p.35 line 25). It is a good way for them to strengthen their position even as they feel most threatened(23).

26. Of course, the teacher in role as the stranger and the 'by-volcano dwelling' children, work towards the presentation of the priests as well. After all, it is they who are kept waiting by the priests, they who come to the priests, and to the priests' part of the hall at the priests' summons. They bow, and they do not just bow, but also say they are bowing; they remove their shoes and they talk about removing their shoes(24).

Neither of these two groups, priests and not-priests, could establish their identity without reference to the other. This is, of course, another aspect of 'meaning' as a collaborative activity(25). The words and actions indicate not only how the actors should be seen, but also serve to define the kind of response the others should make, the kind of role they are required to present. We may notice, for instance, how fulsome the supplicants are in their gratitude to the priests,

Teacher. Thank you. Thank you Great Priest.

Thank you Great Priest Gold. (p.34: 1-4),  
and how concerned they are to show due deference through  
the ways in which they address them. We can see, as  
well, how first Julia and then Shirley and then Julia  
again, ally themselves with the stranger and his quest.  
By so doing, they form another group with a common  
purpose (getting the stranger accepted), and a purpose  
which depends, if it is to be realised, upon the  
goodwill of the priests. We may appreciate as well how,  
in contrast to the priests' responses, the stranger is  
concerned to give them all information they require, and  
even when the stranger and the children are talking  
together, their concern, and the object of their talk,  
is always these priests,

22 Teacher. What have I said? I've upset them.  
23           They don't like that.  
24 Shirley. No you haven't.  
25 Julia.   (No.  
26 Teacher. (Well why are they (turning away?  
27 Julia.                               (They're just having  
28           a discussion. They're discussing it.  
29 Teacher. Are they?                       (p.34)

27. It is by practices such as these that the priests  
are seen as priests and not because they are set going  
as priests. Their activities give credence to their  
title of priests, and they will contribute in some small  
measure to our ability to 'see' others as priests, and  
recognise priestly activities when we come upon them.  
If people stopped working in ways of this kind, there  
would be no priests. The word would be an empty shell,  
and we could do with it as we would(26). It is not  
difficult to uncover these practices and there will be



many more even in this single page of dialogue. You need to know what you are looking for, and you must take as your starting point the assumption that all situations have to be managed and continuously sustained. The purpose behind this extract from the drama (say, getting the priests to let the stranger climb the mountain) can only be realised within a continually managed and presented context, and that is true in all aspects of our lives. We achieve our intentions within situations of our own making. Furthermore, unless work of this kind is done, that which is not presented is lost to our attention and has no further part to play in the making of meaning. We can only attend to those things of which we are made aware, and we are aware only as we attend.

#### MANAGING UNLIKELY SITUATIONS.

28. It is not hard to see the collaborative nature of the meaning making process when we look at the way in which the priests and the others go about the business of putting the priests in place. Everyone is involved. Perhaps we might feel that this is because they share a common purpose within the drama (say, to see if the stranger is suitable). Towards the end of the drama, though, and after the stranger has earned the right to climb the mountain, he meets the guardians of the great volcano. Their only concern is to forestall his intentions and make him go back down again. In other

words, the two groups, the teacher in role as the stranger with his guides and the guardians, are on opposing sides and are concerned to realise different purposes within the drama.

29. Yet still, no one can decide what they want to be and then leave it at that, for we are all a part of the situation we help to create. We are, as well, that which others demand of us, and we are as others see us, for we have to take account of what they say and do even as they have to attend to our contributions. If we look ahead in the drama we shall be able to see the force of this statement and see how situations have to be managed even when those involved are working from apparently opposite points of view.

30. The following extract comes much later, after the teacher in role has been given the chance to climb the mountain. Some of the children (Mark, Ian, Peter and Julia) are guardians of the volcano, and are determined to keep the stranger and his two guides (Beverley and Shirley) from getting to the top. They sorted out these roles before this piece of drama took place.

01 Teacher. Is it much further?  
 02 Bev. Well (quite a lot.  
 03 Julia. (Hey, look...there he is.  
 04 [?] (Come on.  
 05 Teacher. (Hey, who's this? Look. Look.  
 06 Shirley. No, it's all right. It's all right.  
 07 Teacher. I don't like the look of them.  
 08 Mark. What are (you doing?  
 09 Bev. (\*\*\*\*\* people.  
 10 Teacher. But look at them, look at them.  
 11 (They look fearful to me.  
 12 Julia. (\*\* you want to slip down and fall.  
 13 Bev. Don't take any notice.  
 14 Julia. You'll die with the heat.

15 Teacher. What do you mean, don't take any notice?  
 16 They're standing over us.  
 17 They're (huge.  
 18 Mark. (You're going to the top?  
 19 Julia. You'll die with the heat/  
 20 Teacher. Look at the size...  
 21 ..Beverley.  
 22 Julia. You'll get swallowed up.  
 23 Teacher. Look at the size of them...they're going  
 24 to hurt you, I know they are.  
 25 Shirley. We've been up (here before. They're just  
 26 trying to stop us.  
 27 Bev. (They won't do anything.  
 28 Mark. You'll (slip down.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 59)

31. The first and abiding task for everyone is to present the situation, and in particular, the guardians of the mountain and the nature of the threat they bear. If we look at the contributions of each of those on the mountain separately (the guardians, the guides and the stranger), we should be able to see how they present the situation from their own, and different, points of view. We should also be able to see how these disparate perceptions of life on the mountain are brought together so that it appears to each of those involved that they have taken part in a shared in common experience.

32. Here, then, is life on the mountain from three different points of view:

THE GUARDIANS.

03 Julia. Hey, look...there he is.  
 08 Mark. What are you doing?  
 12 Julia. \*\*\* you want to slip down and fall.  
 14 Julia. You'll die with the heat.  
 18 Mark. You're going to the top?  
 19 Julia. You'll die with the heat/  
 22 Julia. You'll get swallowed up.  
 28 Mark. You'll slip down.

THE GUIDES.

02 Bev. Well quite a lot.  
 04 [?] Come on.  
 06 Shirley. No, it's all right. It's all right.

09 Bev.           \*\*\*\*\* people.  
 13 Bev.           Don't take any notice.  
 25 Shirley.       We've been up here before. They're just  
 26                   trying to stop us.  
 27 Bev.           They won't do anything.

THE STRANGER.

01 Teacher.      Is it much further?  
 05 Teacher.      Hey, who's this? Look. Look.  
 07 Teacher.      I don't like the look of them.  
 10 Teacher.      But look at them, look at them.  
 11                   They look fearful to me.  
 15 Teacher.      What do you mean, don't take any notice?  
 16                   They're standing over us.  
 17                   They're huge.  
 20 Teacher.      Look at the size...  
 21                   ..Beverley.  
 23 Teacher.      Look at the size of them...they're going  
 24                   to hurt you, I know they are.  
                   (All contributions taken from page 59)

33. From the start, each person is concerned to present life on the mountain in a way which connects with the others' points of view. Each group presents the situation as they see it. Clearly, they see it very differently and they have to work to bring these disparate perspectives into some kind of agreement. Indeed, this is what they continue to do throughout this section of the drama as they go on to threaten, cajole, discuss, contradict and finally act in a way that takes account of each person's perception of what is going on.

34. On the face of it, though, and if our social life were 'inherently meaningful', this meeting could not take place, for it is presented by people with conflicting views of what is happening and different purposes and intentions. The guardians are concerned to stop the stranger climbing the mountain, and work busily to present life on the mountain as dangerous. The guides, meanwhile, are anxious to get the stranger

safely up the mountain, and want to present the mountain as a safe place to be. If the situation is to be sensible, those involved have to present themselves and each other, and sustain that presentation. However, they are clearly not presenting themselves and each other as those others would have them do. We seem to be lost in the grip of mighty opposites(27).

35. Yet these two points of view have to coped with and managed and both need to be accommodated or we shall have nothing but a kind of slanging match ('Yes, you can', 'No, you can't'; 'shall', 'shan't'), and we may tell how senseless that would be. They work instead to prevent such an impasse by creating 'common ground' as they shift the meaning away from the clash of opposing views, seen here in the contributions of the guides and the guardians,

'You'll die with the heat.'  
 'No, it's all right. It's all right.'  
 'You'll get swallowed up.'  
 'Don't take any notice.'  
 'You'll slip down.'  
 'They won't do anything.' (all from p.59), and

towards the nature of the threat which these guardians present. There is a 'shift' in the focus of attention. They are concerned to find out and demonstrate, how real that threat is. There is, of course, no answer to this (at least, until that threat has been tested), only the way in which it is presented by the guardians and the guides, and that is part of their different points of view. This 'shift' had to take place, for our attitude

towards the social life as being 'meaningful' in itself will not let the guardians be dangerous and not dangerous, will not allow a situation to be safe and not safe at the same time. Such a contradiction cannot be if we are to see the social world as having stability, as existing beyond the perceptions of those involved. This is a nice example of the facticity of the social life being upheld, even whilst it is threatened(28).

36. It is through the teacher in role as the stranger that they accomplish this 'shift', and through the way in which the guides and the guardians treat each other. We may notice, for instance, how the guardians (who represent 'threat') and the guides ('no threat') do not speak to one another. The guardians, at this stage of the drama, direct all their attention towards the stranger and simply ignore the guides. They treat them as though they did not exist, and by discounting the opposition in this way, they manage to give force to their own position. The guides talk only to the stranger, as well, but they do not ignore the guardians, and they cannot, for their concern is to discredit them and all that they stand for. By deliberately not talking to one another, these two conflicting (and potentially sense destroying) views are kept apart.

37. In the midst of them is the stranger, the teacher in role, who presents the situation not as two irreconcilable opposites but as it appears (in taking regard of the others' contributions) to him,

'I don't like the look of them.'  
 'They look fearful to me.'  
 '...they're going to hurt you,  
 I know they are.' (all from page 59). By

speaking like this (and emphasising his own point of view), he provides a context which elaborates the concerns of the guardians and the guides; a context that is dangerous, and only seems to be dangerous. If asked, the guardians and the guides would have no doubt that they had experienced the situation differently, but they would still maintain that they were there, that they were part of an event, part of something which happened. They would both feel that behind all of this was a 'basic truth' and that they had engaged in a 'shared in common' experience. Yet what kind of an event would this be, that was both dangerous and not dangerous at the same time; that was, and was not? What kind of meaning is there in that?

38. This page of the transcript makes sense. It is made to make sense, even though we have no idea whether or not the threat is real. For the moment of our engagement, it is both real and not real, but our attention is kept from the contradiction as it is directed towards the centre of interest, the testing of the nature of the threat. Later we find it to be only a paper tiger(29). It is important to appreciate, though, that 'putting people in place' can only be done whilst elaborating the setting and giving a sense of stability to the situation. The roles of stranger, guide and guardian are aspects of the situation within which we

'see' them and they will not stand out of context(30).  
 If the 'facticity' of that situation is not upheld then these people, too, would crumble. That is why we work to keep the social life ever before our eyes. Our very existence depends upon it.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MUST WORK TO ELABORATE THE SETTING.

39. The extract we have just considered comes at the beginning of a section in the drama when the guardians are first introduced, and it could be suggested that it is only in the early stages of presentation that contributions work to elaborate the setting. In other words, we see here an example of 'scene setting' in which those involved are busily engaged in showing one another where they are. It might be thought that once this stage was accomplished and the setting established, then the actors could forget about it, fare forward and get on with the business for which they had gathered, the doing of some drama. It would be as if they had built a set, and could now get on with the play within it(31).

40. Such a point of view, though, would display a profound misunderstanding of the nature of the managed accomplishment. Whilst it is true that all that has been demonstrated of the situation can serve to provide a contextual background for all that is to come, it will not be available to those involved unless it is continuously presented and upheld. This creating of



contexts is not like the putting on of a false beard which, once in place, can be left to serve its purpose. Rather, the context has to be continually presented in order that any group of words or actions may be made meaningful. Attention must be focused at every stage and we have to know how to find meaning in what is said; we have to know what is significant(32). So, all of the way through this drama, and all of the way through conversational exchanges, the words and actions employed are both in and about the setting they describe. There is no more but that which is brought to our attention and seen in the light of our developing experience and our understanding of what is going on. The social life has to be continually sustained. There is no rest.

41. Shirley says, for instance,

'No it's all right. It's all right.' (p.59: 06), and we can see how her contribution elaborates the situation by helping to put each person (and each group) in place. It is not very much of a line and it is taken at random, and though the words in themselves do not appear to be very significant, they touch everyone in the drama. For instance, she is reassuring, and she means to calm the stranger, so by speaking in this way she points to his state of mind. We see the stranger more clearly for her attitude towards him. At the same time, she draws attention to her own rôle within the dramatic context as a guide and helper, as the one who can comfort and allay fears through her experience. She

speaks out of her role, and as she does, she shows to herself and others the kind of person she is. Then, whilst her words are working in this way, they also indicate the nature of the threat which the guardians present. They have hardly spoken yet, and certainly said nothing that could be interpreted as threatening, but as she responds to their presence and their function, as she responds to the stranger's fears, she makes sure that everything the guardians contribute will be seen in the light of her reassurance. They are different guardians and they act differently for Shirley's line. Her reassurance is part of the threat they present.

42. These few words have something to say about everyone, and that is what happens when contributions are apt and to the point, when they are appropriate. They are appropriate only when all the work has been done to take account of the context as indicated by the words, and after they are made meaningful. So, they also serve to elaborate the setting and, by drawing everyone together, give it a stability which enables us to trust in its meaningfulness and see that the words make sense. All contributions work in this way, and they must do so if they are to be seen as contributions (33).

ALL SETTINGS HAVE TO BE MANAGED.

43. All situations have to be managed. Just before the stranger and his guides climb the mountain and meet

the guardians, the teacher in role introduces a 'waiting time', a time within which they can reflect upon what has happened and consider their future. This will be looked at again later(34), but for the moment we should take the opportunity to see how this business of waiting is managed. It is not the case that 'waiting' just occurs, as though it were some kind of gap in our lives between two events. Even 'waiting' has to be managed if it is to be recognised by those involved and outside observers as waiting. There is absolutely no 'time out' from the business of creating the social life.

44. So, let us see how it is done. The extract is a long one.

(p.46)

01 Teacher. How long do you think we're going to have  
 02 to wait?  
 03 Mark. Wh/  
 04 Teacher. We seem to have been here for ages  
 05 already.  
 06 Ian. Nearly two hours.  
 07 Shirley. They've got to get the boat all (ready.  
 08 Teacher. (Yeah.  
 09 Shirley. Make sure that it's....all right  
 10 because/  
 11 Teacher. Yeah.  
 12 Shirley. of the river.  
 13 Julia. You might not be warm, but if...if you're  
 14 not, you're not to touch the river....  
 15 (at all.  
 16 Teacher. (All right.  
 17 Julia. Otherwise you'll burn.  
 18 Teacher. Will I? Yes, yes...I heard about that.  
 19 I didn't sleep very well you know. It  
 20 seems ages...I seem to have been awake  
 21 for ages, and I've got all myself ready  
 22 and...I'm all eager to go, you know,  
 23 and now...we..we're not getting anywhere.  
 24 Look/  
 25 Julia. They'll call for you soon.  
 26 Teacher. Will they? I don't suppose they rush  
 27 for anybody do they?  
 28 Several. No.

29 Teacher. No. (p.47)

01 Julia. They have to...be careful with it..so  
 02 that they know whether you're good  
 03 enough or not to go.

04 Teacher. Well, I can understand that. It's a bit  
 05 cold isn't it, though, down here?

06 Shirley. Mmm.

07 Teacher. Looks misty up (there on the mountain  
 08 too.

09 Mark. (It's really hot up there.

10 Shirley. Yes well, it really is very hot up there.

11 Teacher. Is it? How many times have you been up?

12 Shirley. Mmm/

13 Julia. We've all been up once when we had to  
 14 (go up.

15 Teacher. (Have you?

16 Shirley. Yeah.

17 Teacher. But you've been up with other people  
 18 haven't you...or not..or is this the  
 19 first time you've ever gone up  
 20 (with someone like me?

21 Shirley. (It's the first time I've been up with  
 22 someone like (you.

23 Teacher. (Is it?

24 Shirley. Yeah.

25 Teacher. Have any of you done that before, taken  
 26 someone up for..for this (trial?

27 Julia. (I've been up  
 28 once.

29 Ian. Mmm. (p.48)

01 Teacher. Did they/  
 02 Bev. I've been three times.

03 Teacher. Have you?

04 Shirley. She's been up a lot. (She's the oldest.  
 05 Teacher. (You've been up  
 06 a lot then, yeah.

07 And, and did the people who you go up  
 08 with, did they all get there...or did  
 09 any of them get there..or none of them?

10 Bev. One got swallowed up.

11 Teacher. Did he? Oh God.

12 Shirley. It's terrible if you (lost one like that.  
 13 Teacher. (It's the waiting,  
 14 you know.

15 Julia. In fact/  
 16 Teacher. I think if I could be on my way  
 17 (I wouldn't mind.

18 Shirley. (Yeah.

19 Teacher. It's just standing here waiting or  
 20 sitting waiting.

21 Julia. Well...a long time ago we only had two  
 22 priests.

23 Teacher. Mmm.

24 Julia. And er...I think..em..Sapphire and I

25               went up with one of the priests when  
26               we were....when they came here.  
27 Teacher. Did you? Does every...does anyone ever  
28               get tired of just waiting? I mean do  
29               you think this is part of the test,  
(p.49)

01 Teacher. really...just keeping us waiting? Do  
02 you think/  
03 Julia. Yeah.  
04 Mark. Yes, once someone came and just went  
05 off \*\*\*\*\*.  
06 Shirley. Yeah. They start getting impatient/  
07 Teacher. I can  
08 understand it, yeah.  
09 Shirley. ..or..er..they're not going to be  
10 good enough.  
11 Teacher. Yeah.  
12 Julia. I don't think you'll be (able to take  
13 your..er..  
14 Mark. (Your \*\*\*\*\*  
15 Julia. ...tape..recorder..  
16 Teacher. Won't I?  
17 Julia. up with you because they'll..they'll  
18 take everything off you apart from/  
19 Teacher. Will they?  
20 Julia. You know what you've gone/  
21 Shirley. And then we'll  
22 maybe (can hide it/  
23 Teacher. (Well....yeah.  
24 Shirley. when you/  
25 Teacher. I'd like it you know, because it  
26 reminds me of things that we saw and  
27 talked about, you know, on the (way up  
28 Shirley. (I'll  
29 hide it.

01 Julia. Could you put it under your belt?  
02 Shirley. Yeah.  
03 Bev. Emerald came up with me once but she  
04 was very worried and she went  
05 (straight back down.  
06 Teacher. (Did she?  
07 Bev. Mmm.  
08 Teacher. Yeah.  
09 Mark. A man who went up came back the next day  
10 and..the priests...the priests wouldn't  
11 Mark. let him alone because of...he wouldn't  
12 ....he wouldn't like waiting.  
13 Teacher. Really? I wouldn't come back.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 46-50)

45. The task for those involved is to give character to the 'waiting', and they do this as they focus upon

the business of waiting,

- 01 Teacher. How long do you think we're going to have  
 02 to wait?  
 03 Mark. Wh/  
 04 Teacher. We seem to have been here for ages  
 05 already.  
 06 Ian. Nearly two hours. (p.46). These are not

simply words that people say whilst waiting, but the way in which we give character to 'waiting'. They are a part of the business of waiting. They are the means by which we make waiting a recognisable activity, and by which we might reasonably conclude that a person is waiting.

46. The children and their teacher then manage this 'waiting', by demonstrating that it is an appropriate activity within the context of the drama,

- 07 Shirley. They've got to get the boat all (ready.  
 08 Teacher. (Yeah.  
 09 Shirley. Make sure that it's....all right  
 10 because/  
 11 Teacher. Yeah.  
 12 Shirley. of the river. (p.46). By such means, the

'waiting' is both presented and explained. It is made visible, as they are able to account for, and show why, they should be waiting.

47. But the teacher has other concerns as well, and he works to make this 'waiting' purposeful, as a dramatic activity. This is a teaching concern arising from the everyday experience of teachers and pupils but it has to be realised in the dramatic context. The teacher wants the pupils to reflect upon the things that have happened and then take the opportunity to consider the way in which the drama might develop. So, he works through his

role in the drama to dwell upon the nature of waiting before an important event. It is at such times that we look backwards and forwards, when we scan our lives and try to adjust to that which lies before. It is a time of nervous anticipation, the hiatus which seems to precede those occasions within which we have to prove ourselves. It is a time for reflection(35). The teacher in role, through his reflection upon their situation, encourages the children to reflect,

19 Teacher. I didn't sleep very well you know. It  
 20 seems ages...I seem to have been awake  
 21 for ages, and I've got all myself ready  
 22 and...I'm all eager to go, you know,  
 23 and now...we..we're not getting anywhere.  
 (p.46).

He gives the waiting an 'edge of tension'(36) that will serve to focus their minds upon the situation even as they dwell upon that which is done and prepare for things to come. Julia picks up his mood immediately and the significance of what he is saying,

25 Julia. They'll call for you soon. (p.46). How often have these words been used for those who wait and worry? The teacher in role points to those for whom they wait, the ones who will not 'rush for anybody', and Julia, with perfect timing, directs his attention to the heart of the situation,

01 Julia. They have to...be careful with it..so  
 02 that they know whether you're good  
 03 enough or not to go.

04 Teacher. Well, I can understand that. (p.47). Is he good enough or not? This is the kind of question which keeps us mindful of our waiting.

48. Once the 'edge of tension' is there they can return to the business of waiting. They join the company of all who have waited(37), whether in dramatic or everyday situations, and comment upon the world of the waiters,

04 Teacher. Well, I can understand that. It's a bit  
 05 cold isn't it, though, down here?  
 06 Shirley. Mmm.  
 07 Teacher. Looks misty up (there on the mountain  
 08 too.  
 09 Mark. (It's really hot up there.  
 10 Shirley. Yes well, it really is very hot up there.  
 (p.47).

It is activities and comments like these which show us the contributors are waiting. They look about themselves and talk of what they see, and by doing so keep us mindful of the volcano and the task that lies ahead.

49. The comments also serve to elaborate the relationship between the stranger and the children, between the one who can only guess at the nature of conditions on the mountain ('Looks misty up there') and the ones who have personal experience of what it is like ('Yes well, it really is very hot up there'). They are making use of the business of waiting to keep each other in place. The teacher in role can take advantage of this in order to get the children to consider their experiences as climbers and prepare for that which lies ahead,

'How many times have you been up?' (p.47: 11). The question serves not only to 'pass the time' and indicate the waiting, but it also gives the children the chance



to demonstrate their expertise. They respond as we would expect them to respond,

- 13 Julia. We've all been up.....
- 21 Shirley. (It's the first time I've been up with  
22 someone like (you.
- 27 Julia. (I've been up  
28 once [to take someone for a trial].  
(Examples from page 47)
- 02 Bev. I've been three times.
- 04 Shirley. She's been up a lot. (She's the oldest.
- 05 Teacher. (You've been up  
06 a lot then, yeah.  
(Examples from page 48).

As they build up their roles as experts, the stranger's role and the 'inferior status' he has within the dramatic situation is also demonstrated. It can be seen in the manner of his speaking,

- 15 Teacher. (Have you?  
23 Teacher. (Is it?  
01 Teacher. Did they/  
03 Teacher. Have you?  
(Examples from pages 47 and 48). These

little responses give to the children's contributions the status of initiations, for they are then 'seen' as the first part statements of adjacency pairs(38). They are actually responses to the stranger's questions,

- 18 Teacher. ....is this the  
19 first time you've ever gone up with  
20 someone like me? (p.47), and  
25 Teacher. Have any of you done that before, taken  
26 someone up for..for this trial? (p.47),

and not first part initiations at all. These are questions through which the teacher is guiding the drama and it is quite a complicated business. It is certainly fortunate that we do not have to recreate artfully

experiences of this kind when we engage in the dramatic presentation of the social life, for then nothing would ever get done. Indeed, as we may see, there is nothing wasted, no word or action for each is part of our experience and our experience is that of which we are aware. It looks very well done, but then it is bound to look well done.

50. They now work to keep alive the 'edge of tension' in the waiting,

07 Teacher. And, and did the people who you go up  
08 with, did they all get there...or did  
09 any of them get there..or none of them?  
10 Bev. One got swallowed up.  
11 Teacher. Did he? Oh God. (p.48). This serves to

keep them all on their toes, and out of all of this comes one of those lines which seem to mark new levels of understanding(39),

'It's terrible if you lost one like that' (p.48: 12). Not only is Shirley able to identify with the stranger and the position in which he finds himself, but she also shows us with startling clarity the 'expert'. The expert who can talk of losing 'one like that', who can speak in a dispassionate and objective way and who can distance herself from emotional involvement. We might be listening to a surgeon talking of a failed operation ('It's terrible if you lost one like that'). It is hard to see how Shirley might touch levels of understanding of this kind, with the strange mixture of sympathy and detachment and find the means to speak of what she felt, beyond a situation in which it makes sense to contribute

in this way. Her words were drawn from the situation even as they showed us where we were. She learns through her work in the dramatic context, as she learns in everyday experience(40).

51. Meanwhile, the teacher in role is still presenting  
the waiting,

13 Teacher. (It's the waiting,  
14 you know.  
15 Julia. In fact/  
16 Teacher. I think if I could be on my way  
17 (I wouldn't mind.  
18 Shirley. (Yeah.  
19 Teacher. It's just standing here waiting or  
20 sitting waiting. (p.48). By so doing, he

'invites' them to carry on with the business of making it visible. They do this by telling stories, as all people who have ever waited do, and their stories speak out of their experience(41). Once again we should appreciate that these stories are not just a means of filling in time whilst waiting, for they also serve to characterise the time as waiting. They indicate that waiting is going on and they are meaningful within that time of waiting. So they tell stories,

'...a long time ago we only had two priests.'  
(p.48: 21)  
'...once someone came and just went off..'  
(p.49: 04)  
'Emerald came up with me once but...'  
(p.50: 03)  
'A man who went up came back the next day and..'  
(p.50: 09)

52. These little anecdotes work on several different levels, and illuminate different aspects of the situation:

[11]. They mark the 'waiting' and put us 'in touch'

with all people who have waited and told stories to pass the time. In this they also contribute to that 'universal experience' of waiting;

[2]. The children present through these stories aspects of their relationships with one another: the guides with the people they lead, the experts and the stranger, the priests;

[3]. They provide a 'comment' upon the present dramatic situation which gives those involved the chance to look at what they are doing even as they are doing it. They put their present circumstances into a greater context;

'Yes, once someone came and just went off..' (p.49: 04)

'Yeah. They start getting impatient...or..er.. they're not going to be good enough' (p.49: 06).

They 'generalise' this experience of 'waiting to be tested' by looking at themselves 'waiting to be tested'(42);

[4]. Each story contributes to that 'edge of tension' which serves to keep us on our toes. They do not provide much comfort for the stranger who is contemplating his climb.

53. Whilst these stories are being told, the teacher in role keeps us mindful of the setting, of the waiting;

27 Teacher. Did you? Does every...does anyone ever  
28 get tired of just waiting? I mean do  
29 you think this is part of the test,

01 Teacher. really...just keeping us waiting? Do  
02 you think/ (pp.48 & 49). We are made

aware of the waiting and its purpose within the dramatic

and everyday contexts. The teacher in role as the stranger is waiting for his test, and the teacher is waiting for the pupils' ideas to be expressed through the dramatic context,

'I mean do you think...?', and his words elaborate both contexts(43).

54. Just then, Julia brings the teacher's tape recorder into the situation and she forces him to give it meaning within the dramatic context(44). He manages to do this (and he must if the drama is to be sustained) as he accounts for it in terms of his own dramatic interests;

'..it reminds me of things we saw and talked about, you know, on the way up.' (p.49: 25-27). At once, the tape recorder (which could have threatened the drama) is used to elaborate the dramatic context and give it a further sense of stability. It is seen as an event which can be recorded and remembered, which can be re-lived. The facticity of the social life is upheld even as it is most threatened.

55. When we look at a piece of dramatic or everyday experience in this way, everything appears to come together. We can see the structure, and we can see the way in which it is constructed. Every word and phrase, every action; seems to be purposeful and to the point. Every contribution can be accounted for. It is as if each piece were part of a carefully crafted play. We can appreciate why the 'playwright' penned each line and

we can understand what he was trying to do and the effect he wanted to achieve. Yet this is not the text of a play, but the transcript of a piece of drama produced, spontaneously, by a group of children and their teacher. Nothing was planned and no word has been blotted, yet I do not believe it to be anything special. It 'works' because each person is attentive to the others and to the situation they are creating; because they understand what is happening, and act and speak in an appropriate manner; because they are concerned to make it 'meaningful' and treat the situation and each contribution towards the presentation of that situation, as being meaningful. Each person contributes out of their own interest and concern whilst yet being mindful of what the others are doing. The result is something which we all can share(45).

#### MANAGING AWKWARD SITUATIONS.

56. It might still be claimed, though, that the examples used so far to demonstrate the business of 'putting people in place and elaborating the context' are drawn from those occasions in which the participants agree about what they have to do. In other words, they have been 'set going' in a particular direction and, though they have to manage the presentation of that situation, they all have a clear idea (from the start) about that which they are to make visible. So, although the guardians and the guides have different views and interests(46), they are in agreement about the situation

they are concerned to present (guardians and guides with different interests and points of view). It could be said that their agreement to present a dramatic context, would be sufficient to ensure that all contributions worked together and to one end. It could then be further pointed out, that many situations in our everyday experience are not like this, for we do not always have agreement of this kind before we start(47).

57. Indeed, we are sometimes taken by surprise. People do not always behave as we expect them to, or in a way which helps us to present a situation that we already have in mind. Sometimes the interests and concerns of others are diametrically opposed to our own, and we find each contribution which they make to be unhelpful and even contrary. It might be thought that in situations of this kind, the self interest and the individual concerns of those involved would mean that much less account was taken of the other person's point of view, and little attempt made to produce contributions which were appropriate in terms of a developing situation. Surely, it might be thought, there could be no sense here of 'collaboration in the presentation of a meaningful experience', and no feeling that contributions might be 'recipient designed'.

58. However, we do not have to define situations beforehand in order that we might then go on to present them. We may need a 'shove' in order to get going, but our dramatic experience, as our everyday experience, is

full of surprises.

59. The following extract, for instance, occurs immediately after the 'waiting time', and as the teacher in role prepares to commit himself to the climb up the mountain. It was to be the occasion in which the stranger got into the boat with his guides, said his farewells and set out upon his journey with the priests to row him across the river to the volcano. All of this had been agreed beforehand, and is no more than, say, people deciding to go to the railway station to see off their friends(48). In both our dramatic and everyday experience we usually know what to expect. However, the children did not know (in that it was not 'common knowledge') that the teacher intended, through his role as the stranger, to have doubts about the climb. He wanted them to appreciate that he might be having second thoughts. He wanted to see how they would cope. How, we might feel, could it be that these children could work with the stranger in the dramatic context in order to produce something of which they had not been told, and for which they had not been prepared? How could they work with him towards an unseen end?

60. Here is the extract. The priests (Mark, Ian and Peter) are already in the boat. The children (Julia and Beverley) and the guide (Shirley), are with the teacher (in role as the stranger) on the quayside. Mark decides that once the stranger, or his guide, has crossed into the boat, there is no going back;



(p.53)

01 Mark. As soon as you've crossed the line y-you  
 02 cannot turn back.  
 03 Julia. If you/  
 04 Teacher. You mean.....you mean even if I...if  
 05 decide I don't want to go on, I...I...I  
 06 can't come back and go home?  
 07 Mark. No.  
 08 Peter. No.  
 09 Teacher. Wh/  
 10 Julia. Once your servant's crossed, you must go.  
 11 Teacher. And...and what..what will happen to me  
 12 if...if I did decide I didn't want to  
 13 carry on?  
 14 Mark. You (still have got to go up.  
 15 Julia. (You got to.  
 16 Teacher. Really?  
 17 Mark. The servants will make sure you do.  
 18 Teacher. Erm..can you just come and talk with me  
 19 for a moment? Look, I...you know, I  
 20 mean, I..I want to go....I'm ever so  
 21 keen but, y'know....but I mean...perhaps  
 22 if I went tomorrow because/  
 23 Shirley. You won't be allowed.  
 24 Julia. You can't, you'll disappoint the gods/  
 25 Bev. It's too late.  
 26 Julia. and then they won't be on your side.  
 27 Teacher. Well, I know I'll disappoint them but you  
 28 see, (I want to do it well.  
 29 Julia. (It's all been arranged.

(p.54)

01 Shirley. And the god is waiting for you.  
 02 Julia. The only way you can do it well is to go  
 03 up now.  
 04 Teacher. Well look, the last thing I want to do is  
 05 keep the god waiting. You know, I don't  
 06 want that. But I want to go properly,  
 07 when I've learnt all the rules...and I  
 08 think it would be much better if I went/  
 09 Shirley. Could  
 10 you wait a minute? All..we want to have  
 11 some (discussion.  
 12 Teacher. (Yes, of course..of course.  
 13 [the guides withdraw]

(Extract from the transcript, pages 53 &amp; 54)

61. The children had no knowledge of the teacher's  
 intention to seem as though he were trying to get out of  
 his promise to climb the mountain. All that they had  
 agreed was that this piece should deal with the  
 stranger's embarkation, and that once he (or Shirley,

his guide) had crossed the line into the boat then they were committed and had to fare forward. They present this situation to each other with consummate ease in the course of lines 1 to 17.

62. Then, in line 18, the teacher in role as the stranger draws upon the special relationship he has with Shirley (even as he presents that relationship),

'Erm..can you just come and talk with me for a moment?'. He goes on to indicate his concern

about the climb he is being asked to make. A glance at the transcript will show that he does not say he wants to give up, only that he would like to delay the event, but Shirley has no difficulty in 'seeing' exactly what he is saying. She recognises the signs: the special little 'talk'; the hesitancy in his speech; the way he protests too much 'I want to go' and 'I'm ever so keen', and so on. She knows what this means (inspite of what he intends) and she cuts right across him,

'You won't be allowed.' (p.53: 23). The stranger's intention to consider the climb and slowly to bring the others to the realisation that he was losing heart, is treated by the children as though he were simply backing out. He thinks he is considering his position, they show him he is letting them down. It is because they treat his contributions in this way, that 'letting down' becomes a part of what he is seen to be doing.

Individually, we are not in control of what we mean.

Indeed, there is a kind of formula for 'backing out', it

is part of 'the stock of knowledge at hand' and Shirley responds to this, rather than to some basic meaning contained in words such as 'I want to go' and 'I'm ever so keen'. She sees right through their surface 'meaning', she knows exactly what he is up to and the stranger gets his answer before ever he has time to tell her how keen he is. She refuses to give him the opportunity to discuss his doubts. For Shirley there is nothing to discuss. Julia agrees about that, 'You can't, you'll disappoint the gods' and Beverley lets him know 'It's too late'. They all know what he is up to, and there is little he can do about that, except protest his good faith. We know, too, what the others will make of that.

63. The teacher had expected the children to listen to the stranger, and he was surprised at how quickly they took his 'meaning' and seemed to make it their own(49). They tell him it is too late to change his mind and that he will lose the support of the gods, and before he knows where he is, the stranger is having to justify his position (and his faint heart) in order to contribute in an appropriate manner,

'Well, I know I'll disappoint them but you see,  
I want to do it well.' (p.53: 27). Clearly, within

the dramatic context the children are as strong as the stranger who, like them, has to work for everything he achieves. Further, he can achieve only that which they will allow him to achieve(50). In this sense they are all bound by the context they are busily presenting and

if they ignore it, the drama will collapse before their eyes through lack of proper attention.

64. Julia, having helped to show the stranger what he 'means', now turns his false reasoning back upon him,

'The only way you can do it well is to go up now.' (p.54: 02). Here is another of those

lines which seem to reach beyond the understanding of the child who speaks the words(51). Her contribution is part of the dramatic context even as it is drawn out of that context and is developed directly (and artfully) from the stranger's words(52). In this, it works to 'bind' his contribution to the situation and make it appropriate. It is part of the work done to show him what he means, and he is 'forced' to respond by presenting a case for 'turning back' in order to preserve his own integrity,

'I want to go properly, when I've learnt all the rules.' (p.54: 06). He is relieved when

Shirley asks if he could 'wait a minute' whilst they have 'some discussion'(p.54: 09), for this is not where he meant to be at all. He, too, would welcome a breathing space and a time to gather his wits, for this is what Shirley is arranging. She is coping with a present problem (how to deal with this piece of 'rationalising' by the teacher in role) through the dramatic context. She is adopting the strategy used by the priests when they felt unable to speak in the drama(53). She manages to preserve her place in the drama (and the drama itself) by acting in an

appropriate manner; she takes the initiative and asks him to wait. She dealt with an awkward situation and showed him what she thought of his 'reasoning'.

'Yes, of course..of course', replies the teacher in role, happy to be offered this respite.

65. Clearly, this extract has been 'managed' as surely as any of the others we have looked at, and it would be foolish to say those involved did not collaborate in making it meaningful, or that contributions and interpretations were not made in the light of the developing context. Yet, no one expected it to go this way. The children did not expect to be in disagreement with the stranger whom they had helped at every stage. The stranger did not expect such short shrift when he wavered for a while in order that they might build up his confidence again. They are still preparing to get into the boat as they intended before the drama began, but these are not the circumstances in which they imagined he would go. They are on their own now, and sometimes life gives us some strange surprises. But it is no less managed for that(54).

66. Now, however, the drama becomes more complicated and even less predictable. The children depart to discuss what they should do, and the stranger is left to talk with the priests and try to justify the action he has been 'made' to take. This is what happens;

			(p.54)
14 Mark.	Have you decided	Bev.	Well, I
15	if you're coming		think that

16 yet? he should  
 17 Teacher. I..I'm just..I'm go straight  
 18 certainly going away.  
 19 to come. It's Shirley. So do I.  
 20 just my friends Bev. He's just  
 21 and I are wasting time.  
 22 trying to make Julia. I know.  
 23 up my mind when's Bev. What are we  
 24 ...just the best we going to  
 25 time for us to do do about it?  
 26 it really (well. Shirley. Why don't we/  
 27 Mark. (you Julia. I tell  
 28 can only go once you what we  
 29 ..only once. If could..we  
 (p.55)  
 01 Mark. you don't come Julia. could have  
 02 now, you won't be an argument  
 03 able to come and keep  
 04 again. going on and  
 05 Teacher. Really? on and then  
 06 Mark. Yes. suddenly you  
 07 could go in/  
 08 Shirley. I..I could  
 09 shud..  
 10 suddenly  
 11 dash and  
 12 then he'd  
 13 have to go.  
 14 Julia. Ssh...he's  
 15 looking.  
 16 Teacher. Well, look I'm  
 17 afraid I've got  
 18 some bad news for you. They've told me  
 19 that if I...if I...I can only go now or  
 20 not at all, and I really don't feel I'm  
 21 ready....look..look, I've enjoyed  
 22 meeting you/  
 23 Julia. You'll have to go/  
 24 Teacher. I think you've got  
 25 a very nice place but/  
 26 Julia. There's no way (you can/  
 27 Teacher. (if you  
 28 don't mind.  
 29 Shirley. Please.  
 (p.56)  
 01 Julia. You'll have to leave here and there's  
 02 nowhere for you to go. You'll have to  
 03 leave all your stuff here and everything.  
 04 Teacher. Well, I'll leave it. I'll be sorry  
 05 (to lose..  
 06 Julia. (You must go.  
 07 Teacher. my stuff. Mark. If he leaves  
 08 Bev. No. it, he can't  
 09 Julia. The god is come again.  
 10 waiting for you. I wonder if  
 11 He is very realises

12                   impatient.                   that?  
 13 Teacher.   He doesn't know  
 14                   (I'm coming, does he?  
 15 Shirley.   (And if he gets angry (on the way he'll..  
 16 Julia.                   (Yes, he does...  
 17 Shirley.   (do horrible things to you.  
 18 Julia.    (he was told yesterday.  
 19 Teacher.   Will he?  
 20 Shirley.   Yeah.  
 21 Julia.    I'd say your prayers now (and go in.  
 22 Shirley.                   (\*\*\*\*\* the  
 23                   volcano will erupt.  
 24 Teacher.   Will it? Oh...I'm...well...um..just...  
 25                   OK...I..I..give me..half and hour to  
 26                   think on (it.  
 27 All.                   (No. No.  
 28 Julia.    Too late.  
 29 Mark.    You must cross now.

(p.57)

01 Teacher.   Half an hour isn't too much, surely?  
 02 Shirley.   Now.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 54-57)

67. The children withdraw to consider within the drama how they might cope. It is quite clear that they are losing patience with the stranger, and when Beverley says,

'Well, I think he should go straight away' (p.54: 14-18), it is just as each one of them feels. She then puts him smartly in his place, 'He's just wasting time', and they all agree about that as well. It is as if they are using this 'break' to clarify the kind of situation they are in, and to reaffirm the sense of unity they should feel ('So do I' and 'I know') and which might have been threatened by the unhelpful antics of the stranger. They are bringing about their own agreement (55). Once they are sure about this, they confront the task in hand,

'What are we going to do about it?' (p.54: 23-25), and take little time to decide what should be done,

'I tell you what we could....' (p.54: 27-29). They are quick, as well, to demonstrate their agreement as they work together to perfect their plan,

05 Julia. ...and then  
 06 suddenly you  
 07 could go in/  
 08 Shirley. I..I could  
 09 shud..  
 10 suddenly  
 11 dash and  
 12 then... (p.55). Shirley takes Julia's

idea and wraps it up for her. They show how they understand one another and then, of course, go on to put the plan into action.

68. It is interesting to see how they present the stranger with whom they were in close alliance and to whom they offered all kindness and comfort. He is treated now as a different kind of 'outsider', a time waster and one who has to be dealt with 'Ssh...he's looking.'(p.55: 14). These children are different people, and they are seen differently, for the change in the stranger and the way in which they present him. We can see another 'side' to their characters, and he is changed too.

69. All of this went on beyond the hearing of the stranger who, anyway, was engaged and held in discussion by the priests. Indeed, this part of the drama was only uncovered later, as the recordings were listened to and the transcript prepared(56). The manner in which the children planned to deal with his 'change of heart' was not known to the teacher in role, and at no time did he



foresee the kind of tactics they would adopt in order to get him into the boat. He simply did not know what was coming to him.

70. Still, this is to look ahead, and whilst the children defined the situation as they saw it, the stranger was left to present himself to the priests as one who is attempting to 'back out'. His words to the priests are familiar, for they follow a pattern which is instantly recognisable as 'excuse making'. It begins as he states his intentions,

'I..I'm just..I'm certainly going to come.' (p.54: 17-19). In fact, as he demonstrates admirably, nothing seems less certain. A 'marker' of this kind, designed to tell us how to interpret that which is to follow (as, apparently, 'I am going to come, so what I am about to say is not an excuse') serves instead to put us on our guard. It prepares us for what is coming; it prepares us for an excuse. It is one of the ways in which excuses are 'signalled'(57). The next step is to qualify his intention to come,

'It's just....' (p.54: 19), and he does this by shifting part of the responsibility for what is happening onto the children,

'...my friends and I are trying to make up my mind...' (p.54: 20-23). These words serve to present the stranger as a kind of passive thing, a 'mind' worked upon by his friends and another mysterious being (..my friends and I..). It gives to his decision a sense of facticity, of being an aspect of the 'way the

world is', and something which is beyond his responsibility.

71. He then provides a positive reason for his new course of action as he claims that he is trying to find 'just the best time for us to do it well'(p.54: 24-26). Again we can see how all this business is part of a familiar pattern of 'managing to make an excuse'. We can see how we shift responsibility for the changing of our minds. Other people and circumstances are made to conspire and, much against our will, we cannot do that which we would wish to do. This sort of thing has to be demonstrated if we want to make a 'good excuse'. Of course, Mark (like Shirley and Julia before him) responds to the familiar pattern of excuse making, rather than to the words which are spoken (though it is interesting that he takes account of, and seems to respond to them in his reply), and his answer brooks no discussion and puts the stranger firmly in place as a 'maker of excuses'.

72. The stranger takes on this role well enough and a moment later, as the children return, we see him set another 'marker',

'Well, look I'm afraid I've got some bad news news for you.' (p.55: 16-18). This will show them what he is up to, and we may not be surprised to see him shift the responsibility for his actions onto the shoulders of others (and this time the priests),

'They've told me that....I can only go now or not at all.' (p.55: 19-20). This, coupled with his

justification, 'I really don't feel I'm ready', is sufficient to show that he is bound by circumstances and his own integrity. It is their rules which prevent him from going later when he will be ready. It is a shame, but there it is. Still, 'I've enjoyed meeting you'(p. 55: 21-22). The 'backing out' is done(58).

73. The children respond to the stranger (and so manage to present him) not only as one who is bent upon backing out of a commitment, but as one who is doing so in a very shabby way. They treat his attempts to rationalise his position with disdain and respond only to the heart of his meaning. So they do not ask, for instance, "Why have you changed your mind?", and no one seems inclined to discuss the reasons he gratuitously offers. They do not, for they 'know' at heart that he is scared and that he has made up his mind not to go. It is at this level of imperatives that they respond,

'You'll have to go.' (p.55: 23)

'There's no way you can/' (p.55: 26)

'You'll have to leave here...

...you'll have to leave all  
your stuff...' (p.56: 1-3). They

give him no further opportunity to explain or justify his decision, and in this they show their contempt for his reasoning and present him as some kind of tattered turncoat (a presentation which the teacher in role began as he first made known his reservations at the beginning of this piece of drama).

74. The children can afford to do away with discussion for they have a plan, and they know he will go in the

end. They satisfy themselves by pointing to some of the consequences of his backing out which may touch him rather closely. For instance,

'You'll have to leave all your stuff here  
and everything.' (p.56: 01-03)  
'The god is waiting for you. He is very  
impatient.' (p.56: 09-12)  
'...if he gets angry...he'll...do  
horrible things to you.' (p.56: 15-17). These are

threats, and by way of punishments for his nasty behaviour. They are a kind of contemptuous dismissal for his rather pathetic attempts to wring out an extra half hour. They show him what he is by pointing to his deserts.

75. But the trap is sprung and Shirley jumps into the boat, 'Now'(p.57: 02). The teacher in role as the stranger is powerless to do anything but follow.

#### CHARACTER AS AN ASPECT OF THE MANAGED ACCOMPLISHMENT.

76. Whilst looking at this piece, it is interesting to see how the children contribute in their different ways towards making sure that the stranger climbs, for although they give him no opportunity to justify his change of heart, they give him good reasons why he should go. Shirley, for example, enjoys a special relationship with the stranger, built up during the course of the drama, and it is in her company that he has to face the dangers of the mountain ('That's you isn't it? Oh, I'm pleased.' p.41: 13-14). So it is, that she demonstrates her concern for him even as she encourages him to climb,

'Please.' (p.55: 29). It is Shirley, as well, who seems to be concerned for his welfare,

'...if he gets angry..he'll do horrible things to you.' (p.56: 15-17). Julia, though, acts quite differently. She hardly seems to have his interests at heart when she tells him,

'You'll have to leave here and there's nowhere for you to go. You'll have to leave all your stuff here and everything.' (p.56: 01-03). Her mind is set, rather, upon the god who is 'waiting' and who is 'very impatient'. The best that Julia can do for him is to send him on his way with a piece of brisk and robust advice,

'I'd say your prayers now and go in.' (p.56: 21).

77. We may see, therefore, that as the children seek to persuade the stranger to climb the mountain, they also reveal certain aspects of their character and personality. Beyond, and contained in, that which they are engaged in doing (in this case, 'persuading') is the business of creating and presenting not only situations and relationships, but character as well. We might be inclined to think that our personality remains stable across different situations, as though it were part of ourselves. We might feel that it is a quality we bring to situations and not an aspect of the experience which we help to present. However, that our personality can appear to us and to those about us as being relatively stable, is due to the work done in making ourselves and our experiences visible(59). It is part of the managed

accomplishment. After all, without a sense of constant personality we would have no concern to make sense, and even the most unusual behaviour is not allowed to 'threaten' this ("It wasn't like him to do that"). In other words, we are made to act uncharacteristically now and again(60).

78. Our experience, for instance, of Shirley in this piece of drama comes of the way in which she talks and acts, the way in which she contributes and the way in which she makes sense of what is going on. We have no more but her words in the transcript, yet we know something of the personality of this guide called Shirley. We may feel her to be caring and concerned, anxious 'to be doing' and dependable. These aspects of her character have been presented as the drama developed and she did not consider and work upon her 'character' beforehand(61).

79. Now, however, as the children 'cross' the stranger, a problem arises in the way in which Shirley's character is presented. Put simply, her action in tricking the stranger who depends upon her, is uncharacteristic and threatens her presentation of a stable personality. If Shirley's part is discredited, then the dramatic context will also be discredited and we shall see it for what it is, a managed accomplishment. We shall be put in touch with the way it works, or fails to work. Sensible people do not act uncharacteristically unless their unusual acts can be

accounted for, and so the children and the stranger set about the business of accounting for Shirley's strange behaviour. To do this they have to explain her actions in terms of her character and present them in a way that will elaborate and give stability to her personality. They adopt several different courses in order to achieve this.

80. We have already seen how Shirley indicates that the action she is about to take is 'in the stranger's interest', and taken to prevent the god from doing 'horrible things' to him. She shows him (and she shows us) that she is being cruel in order to be kind. She manages the situation so that we are prepared for what she is about to do by making sure her action is 'in character'. This is the beginning of the work done to make Shirley's jump sensible and her character consistent. If we are to see what else is done, we must look forward in the transcript, and we will go from the point where Shirley, in shouting 'Now', indicates that the time has come for her jump.

(p.56)

29 Mark. You must cross now.

(p.57)

01 Teacher. Half an hour isn't too much, surely?

02 Shirley. Now.

03 Bev. Quickly....quickly.

04 Mark. Servant.

05 Julia. Servant.

06 Bev. (Servant.

07 Julia. (Servant.

08 [Shirley jumps into the boat]

09 Teacher. Wait. Where's she gone?

10 Julia. Servant.

11 Mark. She's crossed.

12 Teacher. She's gone to the boat.

13 Bev. Yes, I know.

14 Teacher. That means I've got to go whether I like  
 15 it or not?  
 16 Mark. Yes.  
 17 Julia. Yes.  
 18 Shirley. I had to/  
 19 Teacher. I wasn't ready yet.  
 20 Shirley. I had to. They/  
 21 Julia. She had to go..  
 22 Shirley. Ssh.  
 23 Ian. Have you got the Bible?  
 24 Teacher. Yes, (I've got the Bible.  
 25 Julia. (You had to go.  
 26 Bev. The Bible.  
 27 Julia. You had to go.  
 28 Teacher. I..I think/  
 29 Julia. You..you risked her/

(p.58)

01 Teacher. I...I hope I'm doing  
 02 the right thing.  
 03 Peter. Hurry up.  
 04 Julia. If you never went you'd have ri..risked  
 05 her life.  
 06 Teacher. Well I couldn't do that, could I?  
 07 Peter. And she would have (had to die.  
 08 Teacher. (Are you going to  
 09 watch me all the way?  
 10 Julia. Yes.  
 11 Bev. Yes.  
 12 Teacher. Are you sure? And you'll help me if I  
 13 need any help?  
 14 Shirley. Yes.  
 15 Ian. (Yorbbaaaa  
 16 Peter. (Schzorbbaaaa  
 17 Julia. Goodbye.  
 18 Bev. Good luck. 'Bye...have a nice time.  
 19 Julia. D..don't touch the river.  
 20 Shirley. 'Bye.  
 21 Teacher. 'Bye. I didn't want to go yet, you  
 22 know.  
 23 Julia. Take care.  
 24 [Ian makes the sound of swishing oars]  
 25 Teacher. Well, I'll try to.  
 26 Julia. 'Bye.  
 27 Teacher. I didn't want to go yet.  
 28 Bev. 'Bye.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 56-58)

81. Clearly, Shirley found it difficult within the role and with the character she had presented, to make this jump. She knew it would not be easy to do properly. When it came to the point at which she had to deceive the stranger, and show her deceit, she found it



hard to act. It was hard to act because such an action was 'out of character', and she showed that it was out of character by demonstrating how difficult it was for her to act. The desperate and repeated cries from the other children ('Quickly....quickly', 'Servant', 'Servant') attest to this. Everyone (even the stranger as he expresses his surprise, 'Where's she gone?' p.57: 09), works to present Shirley properly, and her actions as being 'out of character' and, therefore, surprising.

82. But matters are not left here and, almost at once, Shirley indicates not only how the deception weighs upon her conscience, but also how she was compelled to act as she did,

'I had to/' (p.57: 18). The stranger 'feeds' this feeling, as he points to the nature of his distress,

'I wasn't ready yet.' (p.57: 19) and so Shirley is able (and encouraged) to stress the way in which she was forced to act. She even suggests the influence of the others upon her behaviour,

'I had to. They/' (p.57: 20). She is interrupted by Julia who is concerned, as well, to present Shirley properly as one who is overwhelmed by events,

'She had to go..' (p.57: 21). Indeed, Julia is so anxious to make Shirley's action sensible, that she repeats this in line 27. It is not all that she does, though, for with consummate skill she turns Shirley's 'treachery' upon the stranger, and manages to make him feel guilty and responsible,

'You..you risked her/  
If you never went you'd have ri..risked  
her life.' (p.57: 29 and p.58: 04-05). When Julia

is done, Shirley appears to be the one who is let down,

'You risked her life'. In one stroke, the stranger's reputation as a rather shabby, self-interested turncoat is enhanced, whilst Shirley, who by her action risked everything for him ('She would have had to die' p.58: 07), is shown to be more caring and more dependable than we thought. So, when at the end, during the farewells, Shirley promises to help him if he needs her, it is no more than we have come to expect, knowing her now as we do. It is not, though, an aspect of her character that we have seen and come to know, not something she takes with her wherever she goes. Rather, it is the way in which she presents herself and the way in which she is presented. It is the way in which she is put in her place and the way by which she accounts for what she does. It is an aspect of the managed accomplishment through which actions are shown to be characteristic or uncharacteristic in order to uphold the sense of stable personality. It is achieved here through their actions and through the ways in which they account for their actions through their language. Shirley's character is presented through the manner of their speaking(62).

83. In this case, then, they had two ways of dealing with Shirley's jump. One was to show how it was 'out of character', and the other was to present it as being 'in character'; both work to provide the sense of personal

stability and the feeling that we are someone in the world. They made use of both these practices and met with considerable success(63).

SITUATIONS HAVE TO BE BROUGHT TO AN END.

84. Everybody seems concerned to get things back to the old footing, in readiness for the journey up the mountain. They put behind them all the wavering and the treachery, all of the tricks, and rebuild their sense of unity through their 'goodbyes'. They make sure that this parting is well done, and whilst the children address the stranger and Shirley as one, the teacher in role seeks to keep them involved even as they say goodbye and the boat gets underway,

'Are you going to watch me all the way?'

(p.58: 08-09)

'And you'll help me if I need any help?' (p.58: 12).

Everyone works to build this scene: those on the shore waving goodbye and offering little bits of last minute advice ('...have a nice time.' '...don't touch the river.' 'Take care'), Ian and Peter with their strange cries ('Yorbbaaaa' and 'Schzorbbaaaa') which are meaningless to me and which yet seem to fit so well, even the sound of the swishing oars. All of these things come together in the light of their parting. Even as they present this parting they demonstrate their unity. Their unity is to be found in their parting. Well may they say they said their farewells well.

85. This emphasis upon the active, collaborative engagement in the making of meaning as situations are presented in both our dramatic and everyday experience, gives rise to a number of interesting points which we have not yet touched upon. For instance, when we look at the work done by these children and their teacher in order to present a dramatic situation which 'makes sense' in the way that everyday situations make sense, we are uncovering the form and structure of the experience. We might describe this work as a kind of methodological underpinning for current theory and practice in drama in education(64). It is an attempt to show what goes on as people present experience dramatically and it is seen to be more than a simple representation of life. Certainly, the activities described in this chapter give new meaning to such generalised descriptions of drama as being 'the art of living'(65). The work done here is so 'life like', in the manner of its methods and practices, that we cannot simply say, 'the pupils are learning to do drama'. Rather, they are learning to present experience dramatically and in doing so they are also engaged in the same kind of activities as those used to present the everyday experience. The relationship between dramatic and everyday experience might be very close. It seems to be a direct one.

86. For Michael Fleming the aesthetic meaning is inseparable from the form in which it is embodied(66).

In other words, the language of drama is not just a means of passing on information, but is itself an aspect of the situation it presents. This we have seen as we looked, in this chapter, at the work done to make dramatic situations visible. However, as we have seen as well(67), language is used to present everyday situations in the same way, and even there, its meaningfulness is inseparable from its form. What then is the nature of this extra 'meaning', this 'aesthetic meaning', and is it something beyond the sense of structure uncovered as we treat any experience of the social life as a managed accomplishment, and seek for the ways in which it is managed? These are questions to which we shall return in the next chapter(68).

87. Apart from uncovering the form of the dramatic experience, examining a piece of drama as we have done, may also provide a means for justifying the presentation of life dramatically. In describing why he moved away from the notion 'that drama was about self-expression', Bolton says,

'There was no yardstick by which to measure the effectiveness or credibility of what was being created, because anything appeared to be right and had to be accepted as such'(69).

Perhaps we have uncovered the kind of control that is a part of 'self-expression', as opposed to an outpouring of 'raw emotion'? Perhaps in showing this drama to be ordered and patterned, we are providing the 'yardstick to measure the effectiveness or credibility of what was being created'? Perhaps we have shown how

'....the meaning of the Drama is poised dialectically between the subjective and the objective, [and how] it is both personal and impersonal, [and] hovers somewhere between the two'?(70)

Certainly, an analysis of this kind shows that not everything has to be accepted as right, for it points to the constraints which the dramatic context puts upon all contributors, and shows how 'self-expression' is bound up with other people's interpretations of that 'expression'. It focuses upon the collaborative engagement within which individuality is realised. Indeed, by stressing the collaborative work done by those involved in presenting experience (either dramatically or in the everyday world) we are able to demonstrate how the individual's 'subjective knowledge' is grounded in, and is an aspect of, the presentation of an apparently stable social world; a world which we can seem to share in common.

88. In the light of the work done by these children it seems perverse to see the participants in drama as percipients(71). Of course, the ethnomethodological perspective assumes the active engagement of those involved in presenting experience, but no one could doubt that these children have been very busy. Fleming is rightly concerned that we should not lose sight of the sense of 'it's happening to me'(72) which pervades much of our dramatic experience, but to do that at the expense of failing to bring out the active element involved in 'I'm making it happen' would be unfortunate.

The participants are attentive to the developing context and their contributions are made in the light of that context, but that very context is an aspect of their contributions and they need to feel the creative power of their own words and actions. Later, they might get the chance to see how they used their words and actions to produce a situation which was 'real' enough to let them feel 'it's happening to me'. This is what we have tried to do here(73).

Chapter Seven.

MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING IN DRAMA.

MAKING LIFE VISIBLE AND MEANINGFUL.

1. Whilst the first two parts of the work recorded on the transcript were being analysed, an account of my intentions in setting up the discussion between the teacher and the pupils was prepared. At this time I was still interested in trying to produce some kind of "general account" of a situation that would take regard of the individual members and their contributions (their intentions and interpretations), so that we might be able to point to a particular situation as if to say, "this is what it means". In order to achieve these rather improbable ends, I planned to meet separately with the teacher and the children after the discussion. We could then play back the taped recording and I would try to draw from each member what they had intended by particular remarks and what they understood by the remarks of other people. I wanted to prepare an account of the discussion with which each member could agree, and which would also accommodate my own understanding (as an outside observer) of what was going on. I tried to "see" the situation from each person's point of view.

2. It did not work. For whilst it took account of the problem (the disparate points of view of those involved) it treated accounts as different descriptions of the same thing. It assumed that those involved were sharing the same experience whilst seeing it differently. There



lies behind such an approach the assumption that there is a 'social world' which each person experiences and witnesses in a unique fashion and from his own point of view. Whilst working with this assumption it is quite reasonable to take each of the members' accounts in the expectation that when put together they might serve to illuminate the situation from different angles and so help us to have a more complete picture of what is going on. It is all rather like the old story of the blind men feeling the elephant and each one having a different concept of the beast according to the part of the animal with which he was put in touch. Of course, in the story there is such a thing called 'elephant', and it might be possible for another blind person who had no concept of 'elephant' to take account of the descriptions and reassemble them in the way of a three dimensional, abstract jigsaw puzzle, that he may come to know what kind of thing an elephant was; it might just be possible. Here, though, as we look at social experience, there may be no such 'thing' over and beyond our own perception of that experience, and a situation may be no more but the words and actions, and the methods and practices, through which it is made visible. The question to be asked, therefore, is how do we manage to produce situations which seem to exist beyond our individual perceptions, and about which we can talk and seek some kind of agreement? How do we produce situations that we experience as being meaningful?

3. All situations are meaningful, for in recognising an 'event' we have already made it visible. We have made it significant. The business of presenting social experience is the business of making our lives appear meaningful. In drawing attention to situations and the ways in which they are managed, we can show them to be 'accountable'; they are then explicable. We may consider, for instance, any extract from the transcript, perhaps one which we have looked at already like 'caring adult and distressed child'(1), to appreciate this point. That we can talk about this piece of talk, that we can identify it and give to it a label, shows that in seeing it we already see it as meaningful. This label, of course, comes of the words and actions used by these people to present dramatic experience and the way in which I ask you to interpret them. Another person may, or may not, agree with my interpretation (and I shall want to be able to use the same piece on another occasion for another purpose, when I might label it, say, 'knowledgeable child informing ignorant stranger' or 'child presenting life dramatically'), but still that person should be able to see what I mean when I describe it as I do, for I shall justify my interpretation by drawing his attention to the methods and practices by which those involved make life meaningful. I shall ask him to look at what they do. Furthermore, both of us may believe that something happened (we have the words of the transcript to show it and my assurance to you

that I was there), and whilst we may not expect our accounts to recapture all that happened, we do believe we are talking (and agreeing and disagreeing) about something. We talk about our experiences, and the experiences of others, 'as if we were there' when those things took place. We can recount them as a bystander or witness to the event, even as one involved.

Sometimes we may describe an event at which we were not present and about which we have only been told. The point is, that on all occasions we feel something happened (something did happen, we can identify the event), and that we ourselves or those who told us about it, were a part of what happened. The situation of which we speak and which we can bring to mind, has a basic 'reality' for us. That we might never be able to tease it out or describe it in its entirety, is part of our unique (and, we think, blinkered) view of the event. There is nothing which cannot be explained, only those things which we cannot explain. That is how we feel.

4. It may be, though, that we find situations meaningful, not because there is some basic meaning behind them but because we share in the business of making them visible. The work done in order to present situations is the work by which they are made meaningful(2).

5. It might be useful to return to the transcript at this point. The following extract comes immediately after the 'concerned adult and distressed child' piece

to which we have just referred(3). Shirley has finished telling the stranger of the accident which befell her friend and of her inability to help,

'I just shouted and...and they never heard me' (p.23: 14-16). The teacher then tries to 'generalise' from her experience.

(p.23)

17 Teacher. Have...has quite a few people in the  
 18 village been hurt by the volcano/  
 19 Mark. Mmm/  
 20 Julia. Mmm/  
 21 Shirley. Yes.  
 22 Teacher. Have they?  
 23 Ian. Especially climbers....trying to get  
 24 up it and....and..whoops..they just  
 25 come up..more..\*\*\*\*\* down.  
 26 Teacher. Why do they try to come up it....I mean  
 27 do...do you....any of you try to go up  
 28 sometimes?  
 29 Mark. No/

(p.24)

01 Julia. No way/  
 02 All. No.  
 03 Teacher. (Mmm.  
 04 Ian. (That's 'cause there's....'cause  
 05 there's treasure on the top.  
 06 Teacher. Are there? Are they your treasures?  
 07 Ian. The island's treasures.  
 08 All. Yeah.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 23-24)

6. If we look at the teacher's initiation in line 17 and remember that which went before as Shirley recounted her experiences of being 'hurt by the volcano', we might think that the whole business is about to start again, only this time with another child. Perhaps that is what the teacher had in mind. However, Ian turns the conversation away from the hurt and the distress caused within the group by the volcano and towards the danger it also represents for people from outside, the

'climbers'. It would be possible to put forward all kinds of reasons for this change in direction: perhaps the emotional level set by Shirley and the stranger was uncomfortable for Ian; perhaps he was anxious to get out of the role of 'excluded one' and take a more active part in directing the course of events; perhaps he was trying to focus more strongly upon the 'group' and its sense of unity; perhaps it just 'sort of came out'. Ian was not very helpful when we discussed his contribution (p.23: 23-25) later, for he could not explain why he introduced the 'climbers' at that moment, or even why he introduced them at all. However, the fact that he cannot say why he said it (except that he seemed to have said it before he realised that he was going to say it) does not mean that it is less meaningful. His contribution confuses no one, but then no one would want to say, surely, that it was just good luck that he hit upon some words which happened to make sense. All of this should serve to direct our attention towards the situation within which meanings are made, and help us to see that a person's intention may not be a necessary part of the meaningfulness of a situation. Rather, this meaningfulness may be found in the way in which contributions are seen to be appropriate, the way in which they are made appropriate. Words do not simply articulate some 'intention' which lies behind them as though they were 'bearers of meaning'. They do not work in this way.

7. Ian manages to shift the level of meaning and the level of emotional involvement by contributing properly to a situation, and this is enough to point the meaningfulness of that situation. In this sense, it does not matter whether he 'meant' anything when he spoke as he did. That he speaks 'well' and attends to the developing context (in a way which he failed to do in the discussion) serves to reinforce that context and invest it with a sense of stability and meaningfulness. *We are able to take its meaning. Ian can talk properly* and we can tell that he is talking properly by showing that he is talking properly, and we do this as we make his talk appropriate. There are 'standards' by which contributions are measured and seen to be 'good' contributions, a structure and a patterning to which we have to attend. In demonstrating what a situation 'means' we have first to show that it is 'meaningful'. We do this by contributing in an appropriate way and by making contributions appropriate. It is not just a matter of having 'something to say'.

8. We ought now, to be in a position to see how these people contribute to the meaningfulness of the dramatic situation. The teacher in role as the stranger begins, as we have seen, by asking a question, and in so doing he demonstrates his interest and his concern to uncover 'what is going on'. In asking questions he treats the situation as meaningful and by answering, the children show that his question 'makes sense'. It makes sense in

that there is something to ask about, and also in that it is directed towards those people who can produce a sensible answer. The response serves to validate the question and so reinforces the sense of meaningfulness which pervades a 'made-visible' situation.

9. However, Ian also manages to 'shift' the level of meaning. He does this by 'connecting' his contributions to the situation as it is presented to him. He connects through the structure (initiation and response) and he connects through the content (as, 'people hurt by volcanoes'). When this connection has been made (the situation shown to be 'meaningful', and Ian able to take its 'meaning') he has earned the right, and developed the means, to move away from those involved, in order to consider the outsiders, the climbers. He can thus shift the level of meaning.

10. The same procedure is followed by the teacher in role as the stranger. He contributes 'properly' by making sure that his contribution connects with the situation as it is presented by Ian,

'Why do they try to come up it...?' (p.23: 26), and by so doing manages to point to the 'meaningfulness' of what is happening(4). He then attempts to shift it back to the old footing as he relates the 'climbing', introduced by Ian, to his concern (which, as the teacher, seems to be to direct their attention towards the experiences of the group, rather than to those of the climbers),

'do..any of you try to go up sometimes?' (p.23: 27). Ian waits. He waits to see if anyone will engage directly with the stranger's question and respond by talking about their experiences. They do connect, but they do not respond in this way, for they all say 'No'. When the teacher in role as the stranger indicates (by his 'Mmm', p24: 03) that they are getting nowhere Ian, quite properly, selects himself as the next speaker(5). He does so, as he connects with that part of the speaker's contribution which interests him ('Why do they try to come up it?' p.23: 26), rather than that which the stranger goes on to say that he means ('Do any of you try to go up?' p.23: 27). So Ian says,

'That's 'cause there's....'cause there's treasure on the top.' (p.24: 04). The second part of the stranger's contribution and that which he claims to mean ('Do any of you try to go up?' p.23: 27) is now lost to the drama for it is left unattended. If the teacher in role as the stranger is to keep the situation 'meaningful', he has to respond in the way indicated by Ian. This he now does;

05 Ian.           there's treasure on the top.  
 06 Teacher.   Are there? Are they your treasures?  
 07 Ian.        The island's treasures.  
 08 All.        Yeah.  
 09 Mark.       Yeah, the island's.  
 10 Teacher.   Are they?  
 11 Julia.      Mmm.

(Extract from the transcript, page 24)

11. It is interesting to see what has happened here. On a structural level the piece has been made to work. There is a 'pattern' to it (and one that can be



uncovered), and their contributions can be linked directly to each other. So we can produce examples of question and answer, initiation and response, and we can point to the grammatical structure of the piece(6). We can show how the contributors are 'in touch' with one another as their words interlock on a structural level. At the same time, the content of each contribution serves to bind it to that which has gone before and to the developing situation as it is presented. The contributions serve, as well, to elaborate and even shift the level of meaning; they give a sense of 'uncovering' as we feel we come to 'see' more of what there is to see. This, in turn, provides an 'underlying meaningfulness', and like the linking of the structure, preserves the feeling of stability through time. We are encouraged to feel that we are taking part in an event. Then, all the while and beyond all of this, is the business of elaborating the setting and putting people in their place, and which we looked at in the last chapter. For activities of that kind serve as well to make us feel that 'we were there' or, at least, in touch with people who 'were there' as they keep us in mind of people and events. All of these things, which are aspects of accounts, encourage us to see the social life as 'basically meaningful'. In seeing it so, we treat it so and in treating it so, we find it to be so. But this sense of 'meaningfulness' comes of the ways in which social experience is managed and made visible. There

may be no more but that which we make of things(7), and the meaningfulness of a situation is part of a continuous, collaborative activity which lasts for so long as that situation is made visible and is available to be 'lived through'.

TREATING THE SOCIAL LIFE AS MEANINGFUL.

12. In order to make things meaningful, in order to find 'meaning' in the world, we have first to believe that the world is a meaningful place, and that those things which people say and do are explicable. When we are bewildered by events, feel lost, cannot make head or tail of what is going on, we have already identified a situation (as, for instance, one in which we cannot take part). We know we are somewhere even though we know not where we may be. Furthermore, we presume in situations of this kind that, although we cannot understand what is happening there will be people who do, and that those about us behaving in such a weird and inexplicable way are, nevertheless, acting sensibly. The assumption that the world and all which takes place within it is ultimately explicable and available to be understood, lies behind all sense making activities(8).

13. We might imagine an explorer of, say, a hundred and fifty years ago who stumbles upon a 'lost tribe' deep in the African jungle. He has no knowledge of their language or customs and he is mystified by what they are doing, yet he never doubts that they are acting sensibly. He can wonder what they are doing because he

assumes they are doing something. We cannot imagine him wandering off because he takes their behaviour to be thoughtless or irrational, and we expect him to look for the meaning which he assumes will be there. So, he searches for method, and very soon he will have ideas based upon his experience to account for their activities. He may have to conclude that he can make no sense of what they are doing, but he will not thereby assume that they are not acting sensibly. Of course, it is quite likely that his interpretations of their actions will have no 'meaning' in terms of the understanding which the 'lost tribe' puts upon its activities, for he will be making sense in the light of his own experience of life. The point is though, that in attributing 'meaning' to these activities he will go on to find them meaningful. It is here that we must start if we are to make sense of anything at all(9).

14. Appreciating that a situation is meaningful is not the same as understanding what it means, but clearly if we are to make sense of what is going on we have to make this kind of assumption about meaningfulness. We have to assume that our experience of life is not just a rash of random 'occurrences'(10), but that it is explicable. Of course, this also means that our presentation of the social life must uphold our assumptions about its meaningfulness and it is this which our contributions are designed to ensure. When they do not, we blame ourselves and not the 'world'. We also have to assume

we have the wit to tease out some of that meaning and uncover something of the order of things and, in principle at least, be able to predict what will occur(11). We do not feel inclined to say that things simply happened. So, when Ian says,

'Especially climbers.....' (p.23: 23); we respond creatively, and not as if it 'just slipped out'.

15. These are the kinds of assumptions we have to work with, and without which the world would appear meaningless (even though it were not). Similarly, with assumptions of this kind, we can make good sense of random events. As we see this happening we may come to appreciate that meaning is not something to be 'found' in experience, but is part of the way in which we make our experience visible. It is part of the way in which our accounts are structured.

16. Harold Garfinkel designed an experiment which is interesting in this regard. He told a group of undergraduate students that they were taking part in an experiment to test a new method of counselling. Within this system the subject would not be able to see the counsellor, who would be in another room. However, they would be able to talk together by means of a microphone. Each student was asked to think of a problem, explain the problem to the counsellor and then ask for advice in such a way that the counsellor would be able to respond with either 'yes' or 'no'; by this means, it was suggested, each of the subjects would be able to take

some responsibility for the advice they received. The student would then assess out loud the answer he had been given and, when he was ready, address the next question to the counsellor. They would proceed in this fashion until the student felt satisfied with the help he had been given. In fact, the 'counsellor' was simply providing answers, and the 'answers' ('yes' or 'no') which he gave, had been selected beforehand in a random way. They had no bearing on the subject's questions.

17. The point is that although these 'answers' which the students received were presented randomly, they were treated by the subjects as though they were genuine responses to their problems. They were taken as though they were meaningful. They were taken in good faith. When, however, the answers appeared to contradict the students' expectations, as frequently they did, they would account for the contradiction and make an apparently meaningless response sensible;

Experimenter. My answer is 'yes'.

Student. Well, I'm actually surprised at the answer. I expected a 'no' answer on that. Perhaps this is because you are not quite aware of my dad and his reactions.....

They had little difficulty in accounting for an unexpected answer for so long as they treated it as being sensible and, therefore, worked to make it so(12).

18. Another rather more homely example of this sense making activity occurred when I overheard two teachers talking about a child (I shall call her Katie) whom they

had both taught. One of the teachers had Katie in her class at the time of the conversation and the other had taught her some two years before. It was clear from the start that they had different views of Katie (indeed, it was because their perceptions of the child were so different that they kept conversing and talking about her). The teacher with whom she was working at the time was having difficulty with Katie whilst the one who had taught her before remembered her as being helpful and co-operative. This kind of discussion is not unusual in a school staff room. They discussed Katie for quite a long time and as they talked they 'accounted for' the contradictory views they had of her behaviour. They had to show through their talk (as we all do) that they were dealing with something (Katie's behaviour) which did exist, and about which they could agree or disagree. They had to show that Katie and her behaviour amounted to more than their individual perceptions of Katie and her behaviour, for otherwise further talk and discussion would be senseless and the world no longer a place about which they could talk meaningfully. There had to be a sense of 'basic truth', and an explanation that would account for Katie's altered behaviour. They assumed this and they set about presenting it, as they dealt with the changes which had taken place. They related these changes to their experience of other children, as they talked about 'difficult periods' out of which she should soon grow (and become herself again!), as they

commented upon problems at home (the birth of a young brother), as they remembered Katie's best friend who had left the school and others who had since come and seemed to influence the class. Each teacher would qualify the other teacher's statements with remarks like, "Yes, but...", and, "I agree, but on the other hand...".

They had to work busily and make many steps that their disparate views of the child might be reconciled, but it was not difficult for them to do and they never came to doubt the facticity of their subject in spite of the contrary evidence. At least, they did not until it transpired (through another teacher's interjection) that they were not referring to the same child but were talking about two different Katies. Indeed, one of these Katies had not even been taught by both teachers. Of course, there was a lot of laughter and comments like, "I must say, I didn't really think she could have changed that much", but the fact remains that they did manage to satisfy themselves that she had changed that much. In spite of the 'fearful odds', they managed to keep her 'identity' intact and so upheld the sense of facticity which characterises our attitude to social experience. They made a situation which, at heart, made no sense, sensible(13). The making of meaning is part of the managed accomplishment and it depends upon our trust in the meaningfulness of contributions. They do not have to be meaningful, but we have to work as though they were.

19. Bearing these two examples in mind, we may return to the transcript in order to see how people work to make dramatic situations appear meaningful. The first part of this extract will be familiar.

(p.23)

17 Teacher. Have...has quite a few people in the  
 18 village been hurt by the volcano/  
 19 Mark. Mmm/  
 20 Julia. Mmm/  
 21 Shirley. Yes.  
 22 Teacher. Have they?  
 23 Ian. Especially climbers....trying to get  
 24 up it and....and..whoops..they just  
 25 come up..more..\*\*\*\*\* down.  
 26 Teacher. Why do they try to come up it....I mean  
 27 do...do you....any of you try to go up  
 28 sometimes?  
 29 Mark. No/

(p.24)

01 Julia. No way/  
 02 All. No.  
 03 Teacher. (Mmm.  
 04 Ian. (That's 'cause there's....'cause  
 05 there's treasure on the top.  
 06 Teacher. Are there? Are they your treasures?  
 07 Ian. The island's treasures.  
 08 All. Yeah.  
 09 Mark. Yeah, the island's.  
 10 Teacher. Are they?  
 11 Julia. Mmm.  
 12 Teacher. Why do you keep them on the top of the  
 13 volcano?  
 14 Several. So no one can get 'em.  
 15 Teacher. Well, who puts them up there?  
 16 Ian. The great god.  
 17 Teacher. Really?  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 23-24)

20. Contributions are not always 'packed with meaning' and they are often made in an apparently arbitrary way. We do not always think about what we say, but we are treated a way as though we are contributing in a thoughtful manner. When Ian says,

'That's 'cause there's....'cause there's treasure on the top.' (p.24: 04), we may

feel that he has got himself into a spot of bother by



mentioning the climbers, for now the teacher in role as the stranger is putting him in mind of his responsibilities (as the one who shifted the level of meaning), and he feels the pressure to go further and explain why the climbers climb. He is being asked to account for his climbers. Suddenly, and almost before he knows it, he has introduced the treasure. Now, although he may be thinking 'off the top of his head' and although the idea of some treasure may have come without a thought, once introduced it immediately becomes a part of the setting and it has to be accommodated. We can see how this is done as the stranger and the children work to 'account for' the treasure by drawing it into the developing situation. They give the treasure meaning as they connect it with the context, and the context is developed in order to contain the treasure. So, the treasure becomes the 'island's treasures', and the volcano no longer just a threat and a source of danger but the guardian, as well, of the island's treasure. Then, out of this comes 'the great god', and the great god comes to play a highly significant part in the drama. Yet all of this came from a 'chance remark' ('Especially climbers....') which Ian could not, afterwards, explain. Of course, it would have been lost to the drama had it been left unattended, and work has to be done if contributions are to become a part of what is going on. If they are to be made meaningful (which means drawing our attention away from

the arbitrary manner of their introduction) they have to appear 'fitting' and they have to be accommodated. In order that they may be, the situation is developed to contain them, and the level of meaning shifted. This happens here, as they move from the climbers to the treasure to the guardians of the mountains to the great god, as they make visible the threat to their identity and the source of their protection. In the process, Ian's chance remark is shown to be substantive. As Shirley said later, in this perspicacious if rather inelegant observation, 'It [the great god] just came out of him [Ian], so we all had to agree'. She clearly appreciated the nature of the dramatic context and added, 'We had to agree, we couldn't just say "no, that's wrong"'(14).

21. To say that these things are introduced in an arbitrary way does not mean that Ian could have said anything or that exchanges of this kind proceed by chance. It only means that at the moment of their introduction (see, for instance, p.24, lines 05, 07, 16) there is a whole range of things which could have been introduced. This 'range' is made up of those things which it would have been appropriate to introduce, and that appropriateness will depend as much upon the way in which they are introduced and dealt with as upon the things themselves. In the end, whether a contribution is to be accounted appropriate or not depends upon whether the situation can be developed

sufficiently to contain and account for it. If it cannot, the remark will be treated as strange and inadequate. In fact, as we shall come to see(15), very few contributions do 'fail' in this way. This is partly because as we speak and act we are mindful of the situation within which we are working and are attentive to its demands. We want to contribute properly and demonstrate our understanding, for no one likes to look foolish(16). However, it is also because we are concerned to uphold our trust in the meaningfulness of contributions and the world within which they are made. We are skilled at making even the most unlikely contribution seem sensible, and it is only upon comparatively rare occasions that we are forced to treat a remark as being inadequate. Then the speaker will be shown to be working beyond the ordinary level of adult discourse and will be treated as a stranger, or a child, as one who is drugged or half asleep, as a dreamer or as a case for special help and guidance. They will be shown to be out of touch with the way things are and their contributions will be treated as meaningless. They will then quickly become so(17). Ordinarily, though, we believe that people are acting sensibly and not just fooling about, and that encourages us to work to make their contributions appropriate and meaningful.

22. So, in speaking appropriately we contribute to the 'background of meaning' and help to develop the situation by which our words may be interpreted as

sensible. This is what Ian is doing here, and we may see how his remark,

'That's 'cause there's treasure on the top' (p.24: 04) comes out of a situation which may (in one way) be seen as a 'small group of people looking for a symbol of value to represent them and give them a sense of unity'. At a stroke, this contribution binds the various aspects of the situation: the group of children, the stranger (for whom it provides an explanation), the 'threatening' climbers, the volcano and the great god. It gives force to the fear of intrusion, it strengthens the group and it marks out the stranger. This is the way in which a contribution drawn out of a context within which people are working, can serve as well to elaborate that context and shift levels of meaning. It is not possible to plan for these things (the teacher cannot tell what Ian is going to say, and we do not usually decide what we are going to say before we say it), but that does not mean that these contributions are accidental or the result of chance. They are produced within situations and we do not often make mistakes.

#### COPING WITH ERRORS AND THREATS.

23. However, sometimes we do make mistakes. If we look a little further on in the transcript, we can see the teacher in role as the stranger ask the children what they do with climbers who go up the mountain and try to steal the island's treasures. This short

exchange occurs;

08 Mark. There have been quite a few climbers  
 09 already.  
 10 Teacher. Have you.....what do you do with  
 11 them?  
 12 Ian. Go aft/  
 13 Mark. We just don't take any notice....  
 14 that's why they get to the top. It's  
 15 so hot up there/  
 16 Shirley. \*\*\*\* they fall down/  
 17 Teacher. Is it?  
 18 Mark. That they'll try and climb down again.  
 19 Teacher. You know they'll never get there?  
 20 All. Mmm.  
 21 Ian. And they..they're in the heart, the  
 22 heart of the volcano.  
 23 Teacher. Are they?  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 26)

24. Here we have an example of a disagreement within the group. Ian is about to suggest that they go after the climbers (line 12) whilst Mark says, 'We just don't take any notice..' (p.26: 13). There would be no sense in a world where people could 'act' and 'not act' at the same time, and so this contribution has to be coped with. Otherwise, it may threaten the dramatic presentation of experience.

25. It is easy enough to see what happens. The group of children and the stranger 'line up' behind Mark, and support his point of view wherein they let the volcano

look after itself and the treasures;

'It's hot up there.'	(line 14)
'**** they fall down/'	(line 16)
'..they'll try and climb down again.'	(line 18)
'You know they'll never get there?'	(line 19).

Everybody, except Ian, works to present Mark's account and to establish it as 'the way things are'. This would seem to be the right course to take. After all, they

had agreed already that they would not go up the mountain (p.24: 22 to p.25: 04), and only a few moments before Ian had said, 'Nobody can get up.' (p.25: 03). His claim now that they go after the climbers (he later confirmed this was what he intended to say) was bound to lead to difficulties for we would be lost in a world in which people 'could' and 'could not' go up the mountain (18). Mark, on the other hand, made use of the 'enormous difficulties of mountain climbing' to account for the fact that they did not have to bother about the climbers. In this way, he spoke out of the context, whereas Ian failed to take proper account of that which had gone before. He made a mistake, and his contribution could not be accommodated easily by the situation they were developing. At this point (as Ian says, 'Go aft/' p.26: 12) the conversation is mismanaged and the dramatic presentation of experience threatened.

26. At least two points come out of this incident.

[1]. These people make very few errors or mistakes in the management and presentation of situations. They really are very skilled, and we may see how successful they are (and how well practised) in the business of making situations appear meaningful. This level of achievement points to their attentiveness.

[2]. The repairing of errors seems to be the concern of everyone, and they work quickly to cover the mistake. Sometimes, as here, they seem to

anticipate the error and manage to deal with it even before it is fully articulated.

27. We have to appreciate that this error had to be dealt with, and the one option which was not available to them within the dramatic presentation was to treat it as a mistake and then set about correcting it. In a discussion, for instance, they could have met such an error 'head on' by saying, "You couldn't go after them Ian, because you've already said that we never go up the mountain". However, to do this here would mean changing 'realities', and that would mean stopping the drama and switching to the everyday experience of teachers and pupils doing drama. Ian would be 'corrected' at the expense of the dramatic context.

28. To cope with the error from within the drama, though, demands special work. They could, for instance, have developed the context sufficiently for it to contain Ian's contribution. Then they might have said, "We have a special group of villagers who are very skilled in climbing and who are very strong. They look out for climbers and are able to go after them. But none of us ever climb the mountain". By this means, they would have modified the contribution and developed the context so that Ian was 'made' to talk sense. We shall see this kind of work being done in a moment.

29. In this case, though, they work differently. They treat the mistake as something which did not occur. They do not attend to it and so, as it is not marked, it

is removed from the presentation. Furthermore, they effectively 'block out' Ian from the sense making process until he can contribute properly again. In all of this they were entirely successful, and it is only because a transcript has been made that we can uncover what happened and see how they dealt with it. Indeed, it is only within the transcript that the drama seems threatened. At the time they did not even feel uncomfortable, for by discounting Ian's contribution they were able to retain the integrity of the situation they were involved in creating.

30. Mark's view is sufficiently well established as the teacher in role as the stranger tells them how it is (even as he seems to draw more information from them),

Teacher. You know they'll never get there?

All. Mmm. (p.26: 19-20). Through the form of his question he invites their agreement(19). They are encouraged to agree about the nature of the situation. Now all that is left is for Ian to return to the fold, and he does so as he contributes 'properly' again,

'And they..they're in the heart, the heart of the volcano.' (p.26: 21). The teacher in

role as the stranger completes the work by responding to Ian's latest contribution and thereby treating it as valid,

'Are they?' (p.26: 23).

31. Of course, not all inappropriate remarks can be ignored, and it is rather more usual (on the evidence of this study at any rate) for them to be dealt with either



by modifying the contribution, or else altering the context in order that they might be accommodated. Often both seem to be done.

32. The following short exchange occurs much later in the drama, as the stranger and the priests discuss who will take him across the river to the mountain.

- 11 Teacher. (Who takes me across?
  - 12 Ian. I will.
  - 13 Mark. The servant.
  - 14 Teacher. Will they?
  - 15 Ian. And me.
  - 16 Mark. And/
  - 17 Teacher. And you.
- (Extract from the transcript, p.42.)

33. There is a nice muddle here as Ian and Mark contradict each other and threaten the drama and the sense of 'reality' they have created. Of course, it is easy to see how the mistake was made, for the stranger's question invites the next speaker to self-select (as they are priests and experts, and he only a stranger), and we should not be surprised if two of them speak almost at once(20). The problem is, that by speaking together they are unable to take account of each other's contribution and so two contradictory statements may be made. This happens here, and it is interesting to see how the difficulty is handled within the dramatic context. Here is what they do:

- [1]. The teacher in role as the stranger attempts to repair the damage by including both the priest and the servant in his answer. He does so even at the risk of sounding strange. So, he says, 'Will they?' in answer to 'I will', and 'Will

they?' in answer to 'The servant'. This is deliberately not an answer to any one of these statements, for it fits neither. Rather, it is a response to both of them. It sounds weird, but it is this 'weirdness' which serves to draw our attention to what the stranger is doing. He indicates how they are to make this muddle sensible by making both contributions acceptable, and not by, say, ignoring one of them. It is this same 'weirdness', incidentally, which alerts us to the problem.

[2]. Ian then adds, 'And me' to explain and account for his error. He 'sees' what the stranger is doing and now he modifies his contribution so that it makes sense. Ian's 'modification' also works to uphold and elaborate the dramatic context as it is being presented.

[3]. Mark, who 'crossed' Ian before by contradicting him, now works to repair the damage, and his 'And/' serves to validate Ian's contribution and clear up the muddle.

[4]. The teacher in role as the stranger wraps it up as he says, 'And you'.

34. This is how 'threats' are dealt with from within the dramatic context, so that they may be perceived not as problems but as contributions. In this sense every contribution is a potential threat, and will remain so until it is made meaningful. Sometimes, as in these

examples and as in the Garfinkel experiment, those involved have to work hard to make situations make sense but in every case there is work to be done. The meaningfulness of a situation is never given to us and there may be no more but that which we make of things, no more but the work we do in order to make contributions appropriate.

#### MAKING EVERYDAY LIFE MEANINGFUL.

35. It might be worthwhile at this point to try to see how all of this connects with the business of making life 'meaningful' within our everyday experience. It is not easy to appreciate how it is done. This is partly because we do not treat our everyday experience as a 'managed accomplishment' and therefore cannot see it as one whilst we are 'caught up' in the normal course of living. It is also because we are 'experts' in presenting a form of life which each of us can seem to share, and which bears out our assumptions about its facticity(21). The position is further complicated when we see that many of the situations in which we appear to find ourselves are so 'formalised', so 'institutionalised' (as, shopping, teaching, mothering, travelling, church going, etc.) that whole areas of the context may be taken for granted even as they are used to make the situation sensible.

36. One way of uncovering the kind of work which has to be done to make our experience seem 'real' is to see

what happens when mistakes are made and the facticity of that experience is threatened. It is quite rare (as one might imagine from our brief examination of mistakes in drama) for us to be confronted with the nature of our experience in this way, and even more rare (due to the coping procedures which we adopt at such times) for us to see our 'world' crumble before our eyes. However, occasionally it does happen. We shall take one example, but one which is common enough for most of us to have met. Think of an occasion when in, say, a high-street store, we turn to an 'assistant' for help and get the reply, 'I'm sorry, I don't work here'. It is a simple enough error, and common enough, but it is interesting to see what is happening when it occurs.

37. Those involved have failed to make the situation and their own roles within it visible to one another. It could be that the fault lies in the way in which they have put themselves and each other 'in place' or it may be that the 'customer' has failed to attend properly to the context of shopping. Certainly, for a moment, the attention of one, or both, of those involved has strayed and the situation has become unclear.

38. In this example, the situation is our experience of high-street store shopping, and we make it visible to one another by adopting particular attitudes and acting in appropriate ways. So, some people will be doing those things (and say to be doing those things) which typify them as they are 'customers'. They may, for

instance, be trying on clothes, comparing prices, asking for help, but also, perhaps, just browsing, wasting some time, or keeping out of the rain. At the same time, others will doing those things (and seen to be doing those things) which typify them as 'shop assistants'. They might be greeting ("Can I help you?"), taking money and giving advice, measuring, perhaps being rude ("She's an awkward customer"). Of course, the whole business will be reinforced or 'institutionalised' by all the apparatus of the high-street store: the building itself, the sign above the doors, the stock on display, the cash registers, and so on. All of these things will contribute to the provision of a context within which certain words and actions can be seen as meaningful.

39. However, it is not the case that by putting people into a building called, say, 'Marks and Spencer' they then become, for as long as they are there, sales assistants. Nor yet by dressing someone in a smart overall, giving them a name badge and standing them behind a counter, do we make them sales assistants. We cannot simply set people going in this way, as though they were models driven by clockwork. The badges and the overalls do help, for they make people 'feel' like sales assistants and they encourage others to treat them as sales assistants (and we know how effective that may be) but there is still work to be done. This work must be done from moment to moment as people engage in 'sales assistant practices' and present themselves as 'fitting'

to wear the badge and work in the building called 'Marks and Spencer'. Unless they do this properly and consistently, the badge and the smart overall, the building itself, will all lack currency for it is not possible to separate these things from the methods and practices by which all involved (sales assistants, customers, managers, security guards, shop lifters, etc.) manage to present and make visible 'Marks and Spencerish' activities. These are not done once and set going for all time, like a fat watch, but managed continuously and kept alive in the light of their presentations. You can tell people what to do, show people what to do, but then they have to do it, and it is what they do that counts(22).

40. The interaction between the sales assistants and the customers is characterised by their attitudes towards each other, as they are either 'customers' or 'sales assistants' dealing with other 'customers' or 'sales assistants'. It depends upon them presenting themselves 'properly', and seeing each other in the 'right' way. It is the business of putting people in their place. The whole affair is managed and it has to be kept going and the two 'types' work together just as successfully when the situation may be described as, say, 'sales assistant being rude or awkward with the customer' as when they are engaged in completing a mutually satisfactory sale(23). Indeed, they depend upon each other as the priests depended upon the

supplicants in order to be seen as priestly(24).

50. What these people must not do, though, if they are to continue to present the everyday experience of high-street shopping, is question the basic facticity of that experience. If they doubt that it makes sense (beyond their capacities to make it seem sensible) then it will all crumble before their eyes. This is the threat we have to confront when we fail to present situations in a 'proper' way. This is what happens when we fail to contribute appropriately.

"Would you tell me if they do this dress  
in red, please?"  
"I'm sorry, I don't work here."

51. This is hardly earth shattering, but it is likely to be an awkward moment for both people. One of them might well have been startled to be addressed and seen so strangely, and the other may be thrown into confusion to have her mistake made plain. It will be confusing. It will be upsetting, awkward, and it may lead to embarrassment and even a feeling of guilt. There will probably be apologies and some strained laughter. We could expect this kind of 'reaction'. Yet all of these responses may be seen as methods of coping with the threat. For the moment, the world is 'out of joint', it loses the sense of facticity with which it is normally bound about. With that goes the sense of security and comfort, the sense of stability that comes of our knowledge of a 'world out there' (but within which we live), safe and sure, and always to be relied upon. We

get a glimpse of the abyss, and that is unnerving. By shifting the responsibility for this mess upon ourselves (the laughter, the apologies, the feelings of guilt and embarrassment), the 'real world' is not only shown to be intact, but also has its facticity reinforced. Even by beginning this paragraph in the way that I have ('This is hardly earth shattering'), I do my piece to uphold the stability of our everyday experience. It is hard to confront the real significance of little errors such as these, yet we are in exactly the position of those in the drama who made mistakes. A person presents herself as a 'customer' and is taken for a 'sales assistant'. For that moment, in that context, she both 'is' and 'is not', and something has to be done about it. It is not difficult to overcome, it is a common enough error, but something has to be done. So we laugh about it and reproach ourselves for being foolish and so 'downgrade' the significance of the event. We treat it as not being a serious account of the way the world happens to be. In other words, we do not question the world, but, through our 'repair' work, question ourselves. We take the blame and keep the world safe before our eyes. All our contributions work towards this end, the maintenance of a visible reality beyond the work we do to give it a sense of stability and structure.

GENERATING A SENSE Of MEANINGFULNESS IN DRAMA: giving to objects a sense of significance and dealing in symbols.

52. As we search for the way in which situations are



made meaningful in dramatic and everyday experience we would do well to return for a while to the transcript. The next extract comes towards the end of the drama, as the stranger and the guides are confronted by the guardians of the mountain. It should help us to see how a sense of 'meaning' is generated by the activities of those involved, as they engage in the business of making situations visible. We begin as the guardians confront the teacher in role as the stranger and the guides.

(p.60)

08 Mark. Are you going/  
 09 Julia. You'll/  
 10 Mark. are you going to the top?  
 11 Teacher. We..well only if it's all right with you.  
 12 I would have quite liked to go and/  
 13 Julia. There's  
 14 the bones of the other (people who tried.  
 15 Teacher. (\*\*\*\*\* is that/  
 16 Several. (People.  
 17 Teacher. (What?  
 18 Mark. (We don't mind. We won't see you again..  
 19 ..ever.  
 20 Shirley. We're just seeing them because they said.  
 21 They're not there really.  
 22 Teacher. But I can see bones.  
 23 Mark. (You'll need \*\*\*\*\* mountain.  
 24 Bev. (We are going.  
 25 Julia. (If you don't believe us pick one up.  
 26 Teacher. Beverley, I can see bones.  
 27 Mark. You'll be boiled.  
 28 Julia. If you don't (believe they're real, pick  
 29 one up.

(p.61)

01 Ian. (The guards of hell will get  
 02 you.  
 03 Teacher. Yeah. Look, it's been ever so nice  
 04 meeting you. I...I think you've got a  
 05 lovely mountain but I think I'd rather  
 06 (go back if you don't...  
 07 Julia. (Oh no you don't/  
 08 Teacher. Hey.  
 09 Shirley. Come on.  
 10 Ian. The guards of hell will get you.  
 11 Teacher. Look, I don't believe this.

12 Mark. You won't (make it.  
 13 Julia. (You'll slip down and die.  
 14 Bev. Don't take any notice.  
 15 Teacher. Look just...(just a second.  
 16 Mark. (You'll be dead.  
 17 Bev. It's only (trying to scare you.  
 18 Teacher. (Look, just a second..have you  
 19 been through these people (before?  
 20 Bev. (Yes.  
 21 Shirley. (Yes.  
 22 Teacher. What about those bones down there?  
 23 Bev. They're only animal bones.  
 24 Teacher. Are they?  
 25 Bev. They're not our bones.  
 26 Shirley. Yes.  
 27 Teacher. Are you sure?  
 28 Bev. (Positive.  
 29 Shirley. (Yes.

(p.62)

01 Teacher. Well, they look so tall...they're huge  
 02 people.  
 03 Shirley. No.  
 04 Bev. Because they're monsters.  
 05 Julia. (Yes.  
 06 Mark. (Yes.  
 07 Shirley. They try and stop you.  
 08 Julia. (There's the tombstones/  
 09 Teacher. (What's happening?  
 10 Julia. over there.  
 11 Teacher. Look at the tombstones they've built.  
 12 Mark. Look what (it says on it.  
 13 Julia. (Do you want to get swallowed  
 14 up?  
 15 Mark. Eaten by the great volcano.  
 16 Bev. Don't take any notice.  
 17 Shirley. Don't take any/  
 18 Teacher. Eh...wh/  
 19 Bev. They're only trying to scare  
 20 you.  
 21 Teacher. Look, I remember the priest said to you  
 22 down below that you two would be all  
 23 right. They said that 'cause you'd  
 24 been up before. They didn't say that  
 25 to me and there's a...tombstone which  
 26 says, 'Eaten by the great volcano'.  
 27 Mark. (Right.  
 28 Shirley. (All I know/  
 29 Bev. \*\*\*\*\* (has been before.

(p.63)

01 Julia. (\*\*\*\*\*  
 02 Bev. They're not fearful or scareful.  
 03 Shirley. And if you don't go past them the gods  
 04 will think (you're no good.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 60-63)

53. A direct question from Mark, 'Are you going to the

top?'(p.60: 08-10), encourages the stranger to present his position as one who would like to go, but 'only if it's all right with you'(p.60: 11). This 'question and answer' sequence only makes sense if we know that Mark is a guardian and the teacher, a stranger. It only makes sense if we know that the stranger has an 'intention' (to see 'the great god') which the guardians can confound. This is the kind of context (very rough and ready, as it is presented here, for it could be indefinitely elaborated) within which the words work. These same words serve, as well, to 'indicate' this context and bring it to our attention so that we may understand what is going on. This is the reflexive force of the meaning making process and it is at the heart of all our activities as we go about the business of making experience visible. Every contribution works in this way(25).

54. Then Julia, drawing upon the validation which this 'accommodating' reply by the stranger gives to her and her position as a guardian, confronts him with a pile of bones. Her timing is perfect.

'There's the bones of the other people  
who tried.' (p.60: 13-14).

55. The teacher in role as the stranger is faced, for the first time, not with threats (indeed, Mark goes out of his way to demonstrate his lack of concern, 'We don't mind. We won't see you again....ever.' p.60: 18) but with 'concrete' evidence of the guardians' power, and

the unhappy fate of those who have gone before.

56. Shirley, one of his guides, appreciates at once the force of these 'concrete' symbols and the effect they will have upon the stranger, and so she tries to reduce them to mere figments of the imagination,

'We're just seeing them because they said.

They're not there really.' (p.60: 20-21). Instead of trying to argue about the 'message of the bones' she simply discounts them, she treats them as a fantasy, and in so doing tells us more about the nature of these guardians. She also works to give these 'imagined bones' substance within the drama, by treating them as being unreal and things which we are 'just seeing'. It is a nice irony(26).

57. The stranger insists that he can 'see the bones' (p.60: 22) and the guides begin to doubt his resolve for they sense that he is wavering. Beverley hustles him onwards as she describes what they are doing ('We are going' p.60: 24), and so Julia presents the bones again. This time, though, her presentation has to take account of Shirley's dismissal of the bones as an illusion,

'If you don't believe us pick one up.' (p.60: 25)

'If you don't believe they're real,  
pick one up.' (p.60: 28-29). The stranger, as well,

supports Julia's presentation in a way which also elaborates Shirley's treatment of them as being illusory,

'Beverley, I can see bones' (p.60: 26). They are putting these bones beyond imagination and securely into the 'real' world where things may be touched and have to

be taken seriously; but, in doing so, they also take into account Shirley's contribution. All of this is quite enough for the stranger who makes his excuse to leave the mountain and abandon his climb,

'Look, it's been ever so nice  
meeting you. I...I think you've got a  
lovely mountain but I think I'd rather  
go back if you don't...' (p.61: 03-06). This

pattern of excuse making should be familiar to us by now (27). He speaks as if he were acting improperly in wanting to go instead of behaving exactly as they wanted him to behave. He acts like a guest trying to leave early, '...it's been ever so nice meeting you.....you've got a lovely mountain but...' (p.61: 04-05). We have been this way before.

58. There then begins a kind of 'push and pull' piece, with the guardians and the guides both trying to convince the stranger of the best course of action. The guardians are working to put him off his climb,

'The guards of hell will get you.' (p.61: 10)  
'You won't make it.' (p.61: 12)  
'You'll slip down and die.' (p.61: 13)  
'You'll be dead.' (p.61: 16)

and the guides are trying to draw their sting and give him encouragement to fare forward,

'Come on.' (p.61: 09)  
'Don't take any notice.' (p.61: 14)  
'It's only trying to scare you.' (p.61: 17).

Indeed, they get so carried away that the stranger, caught between the concerns of two opposing groups, cannot seem to get a word in edgeways,

13 Julia. (You'll slip down and die.

14 Bev. Don't take any notice.  
 15 Teacher. Look just...(just a second.  
 16 Mark. (You'll be dead.  
 17 Bev. It's only (trying to scare you.  
 18 Teacher. (Look, just a second..have you  
 19 been through these people (before?  
 20 Bev. (Yes.  
 21 Shirley. (Yes.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 61).

When the teacher in role as the stranger tries to break into this exchange by asking the guides if they 'have been through these people before?'(p.61: 18-19), it seems as if he is giving them the opportunity to win his confidence, and bring to an end this 'slanging match', which has little to do with 'making meanings', seems to be getting nowhere, and may well end in the use of physical force(28). After all, the bones before them cannot be those of the guides, and so it becomes a fate that may not come to all who pass this way.

59. However, the bones cannot just be dismissed. They have been treated as an illusion yet shown to be real, and they cannot be 'taken out' for they are now a part of the dramatic context which these people are engaged in creating, the facticity and stability of which has to be upheld. They still have to be accounted for. These bones, which cannot only be seen, but also touched and picked up (and, later, even thrown about, 'Catch this leg.' p.63: 05) have to be drawn into the situation within which the guides and the stranger have already shown them to be an unreliable reminder of earlier climbers. They have to be transformed by the drama and their significance has to change. They have to be

'modified' so that they can be accommodated by the situation and, at the same time, serve to elaborate it.

This is how Beverley manages to achieve these ends,

- 22 Teacher. What about those bones down there?  
23 Bev. They're only animal bones.  
24 Teacher. Are they?  
25 Bev. They're not our bones.  
26 Shirley. Yes.  
27 Teacher. Are you sure?  
28 Bev. (Positive.  
29 Shirley. (Yes.  
(Extract from the transcript, p.61). We

can see that Beverley has managed to remove the guardians' threat whilst working within the dramatic context to uphold their presentation of the bones. It is nice to see the levels upon which these children are working. Now they can continue their journey up the mountain and face the people who are 'huge' but only 'look so tall'(p.62: 01), and can only 'try and stop you'(p.62: 07).

60. But Julia is ready with the tombstones,

'There's the tombstones/' (p.62: 08), and another concrete symbol of their power and the stranger's fate is shown to be standing 'over there'(p.62: 10). The teacher in role as the stranger helps her to establish it more firmly,

'Look at the tombstones they've built.' (p.62: 11), and there is even some writing upon it. Mark and Julia work to get the inscription right,

- 12 Mark. Look what (it says on it.  
13 Julia. (Do you want to get swallowed  
14 up?  
15 Mark. Eaten by the great volcano.  
(Extract from the transcript, p.62).

61. This epitaph draws everything together and floods back through the drama uncovering new levels of meaning. It reaches back to the 'climbers' and the threat they represented, to the 'treasure' and the 'great god', to the power of the volcano to protect the tribe. Within this symbol, too, are contained the guardians and the stranger, those who write epitaphs and those for whom they are written. It seems to stand at the very heart of the dramatic experience; it draws unto itself all that has gone before and stands as a monument to all that has been done. Its significance will stream forward into the drama and colour everything that is to come(29).

62. Contributions of this kind cannot be planned or worked for; they are generated from within the situation by people who are attentive and take account of what is happening, by people who contribute in an appropriate way. No amount of direct preparation could have prepared these people for the production of symbols of this kind or brought them where they are(30). For these symbols, as they are presented, are drawn from (even as they are a part of) the situation within which they are made visible, and which we may see grow and prosper before our very eyes. This is the point at which meaning is made. Here it is generated, and we have to do the work ourselves(31).

63. Beverley and Shirley attempt to redirect the stranger's attention. They try to shift the level of



meaning again,

16 Bev. Don't take any notice.  
17 Shirley. Don't take any/  
18 Teacher. Eh...wh/  
19 Bev. They're only trying to scare  
20 you.  
(Extract from the transcript, p.62).

But Mark and Julia have done their work well and these attempts do not make much impression upon the teacher in role as the stranger. Indeed, he is overwhelmed by the presentation and the statement which follows is the most clear cut, uncompromising account of the situation that he has yet made,

'Look, I remember the priest said to you down below that you two would be all right. They said that 'cause you'd been up before. They didn't say that to me and there's a...tombstone which says, "Eaten by the great volcano".' (p.62: 21-26).

Everyone seems to be carried along on the crest of a wave of their own creation(32), and Shirley abandons the attempt to dismiss the guardians and their threat and moves instead to touch the stranger more nearly,

'..if you don't go past them the gods will think you're no good.' (p.63: 03-04). It is quite enough to set him on his way(33).

64. This 'bones and tombstones' piece is rather like a very short play, with its own structure, its own plan. It appears to be skilfully plotted and well crafted. It is almost as if someone had prepared a script, as if they had decided what each character should say and do next. Every contribution can be explained in terms of those which have gone before, in terms of the developing

situation. More than this, every statement and every action appears to be part of the whole, and seems to look forward to that which is yet to come. There is a kind of inevitability about the whole thing. It is as if it existed in its entirety, like a play in which the final scene is written before ever the curtain rises on the first act. Of course, we may want to explain this by the fact that we are dealing with a transcript which we can study like a playscript, the end as well as the beginning, and even things which 'took place' before the beginning and after the end. But still, the fact remains that this 'ill-considered trifle', this little drama, appears tightly structured and can be examined and analysed in the same way as a play or a novel. This, alone, should tell us something about the relationship between real and fictional experiences.

65. For, it may be that the presentation of a form of life, whether it be everyday or make-believe experience we are concerned to make visible, requires that we draw upon the same methods and practices. The kind of work demanded of us as contributors may be the same, and the difference may lie in our agreement to treat certain aspects of the managed accomplishment as being 'make-believe'. We may not look at these aspects in the same way, but still, they may work in the same way. Further, in looking at the 'meaningfulness' of a situation from the outside, we can make use of the same methods and practices by which those involved worked to make the

situation accountable to themselves. We are concerned with the structure they have put upon their experience, the way they have managed it, and we have tried to show what they had to do in order to make it work. Of course we can never come up with a definitive account and one that will serve for all times, but then finding meaning is not like that. In the end we have only that which is before us, that which is presented for our attention, the words and actions of those involved, and we have to make something of it.

The question is, what do you make of it?

66. We are inclined to think of the structure of a play as lying in some way behind the words and the actions. We see it as a kind of patterning imposed upon the 'real world' by the artist to give it form. It may be, though, that this underlying structure is something that we find as we study attempts to make sense of a life which we believe to be meaningful. This 'patterning', which we may feel to be an aspect of artistic endeavour and refer to as 'aesthetic meaning'(34), may be uncovered as we look at all sense making activities whether they take place in everyday or make-believe situations. This structure may be found whenever people present experience to one another so that it appears familiar, whenever we pay attention to a developing situation or act and speak in an appropriate manner. Even the most inconsequential engagement in the everyday world will have a unity and structure which

transcends the individual member's perception of what is happening and we can see that this is the case, as well, in the bones and the tombstone piece. The concept of aesthetic meaning may be quite hard to sustain as purely a quality of artistic endeavour separated from everyday experience(35).

#### LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING.

67. We should consider, for a moment, as we keep in mind the bones and tombstone piece, what we would want to say about the nature of understanding and what is involved that we might with some confidence declare, "Now I understand what this means". It is not simply a matter of some kind of 'cognitive consensus'(36), but rather a feeling that we know where we are and can see what is going on, even though we will not be able to tell how it is going on. There is a sense in which we feel 'at home' in a particular situation. We might be at the stage where we have received little more than the 'gentle shove' to get us going, but we might be enjoying the kind of involvement shown by the children in the bones and tombstone piece. We should feel, too, that we know what to say and how to act, and could, if required, make an appropriate contribution. We should know how to behave and how to fare forward(37). We feel we could handle the situation. When we understand what is going on in this way we know, as well, when someone else makes a 'false move'. We can recognise the inadequate or contradictory contribution, and we know how to work to

make it sensible. It is this kind of ability which enables us to feel we understand what is happening, and the children in this piece have demonstrated their understanding through their creative practices. Only think, for instance, of the success they have here, and then contrast it with the problems Ian had during the discussion, when he was clearly unable to contribute 'properly'(38).

68. There are two ways in which I want to consider different levels of understanding. In the first sense, those involved in the dramatic presentation of experience will also be engaged in the everyday presentation of teachers and pupils doing drama, or actors playing parts. Their words and actions will be recoverable through different contexts and illuminate different contexts. There is also the sense in which members perceive situations in different ways, and we can see this occurring within the everyday and dramatic presentation of experience.

69. We had better begin by looking at the two distinct levels of experience and understanding described by the terms 'doing drama' and 'presenting experience dramatically'. In this, we shall extend the discussion begun in Chapter Four(39).

#### DOING DRAMA AND THE DRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE.

70. We have looked already in some detail at the way in which the teacher gets drama going, and at the kind

of things which the teacher and the children need to do in order to present a situation which is recognisable as 'teachers and pupils doing drama'(40). Clearly, just working in the school hall will not be enough, and we should remember, as well, the difficulties Ian had in 'doing drama' when the others were engaged in presenting a different kind of experience(41). So, the first and abiding consideration of the drama teacher is that the children should be involved in the dramatic presentation of experience and not left simply to do drama. We have seen the implications of this distinction for the way in which those involved attend to their work(42), and later we shall be looking at the teacher working in role through the dramatic presentation of experience(43).

71. For the present, though, it seems important that, where possible, those activities through which the teacher indicates that he is involved in a situation which may be interpreted as 'teacher and pupils doing drama', should also serve to elaborate the experience presented through that drama. Put simply, no amount of doing drama will compensate for the lack of imagined experience. We may be reminded of the teacher (as we saw in the transcript) who made use of the 'rights' he enjoyed as an adult stranger to influence the course of the drama. By working through the role of the stranger, he could make use of the structure of the conversation, and by taking the role of a 'non-expert' he could guide the children through his questioning. His teaching

interests were realised through the dramatic context, and that ensured that he attended to that context and not to his role as a drama teacher(44). He was, in a sense, astride the two levels of experience, in touch with the everyday reality of teachers and pupils and involved in the creation of a make-believe situation(45). However, the two are not (of themselves) distinct, and contributions work differently only as they are attended to and treated differently, as they are seen as 'real' or 'make-believe'. Further, as we shall come to see(46), the same contribution can work within and elaborate both the everyday and make-believe areas of experience. They can run concurrently, which is not the same as saying they can be experienced at the same time. Rather, the actions of those involved in the dramatic presentation of experience, can also be interpreted within the everyday experience of teachers and children doing some drama. So, some people in the room may be treating the 'teacher' as a stranger, whilst others see him as a drama teacher and the contributions he makes to the dramatic context as illuminating his role as a teacher. Think, perhaps, of a group of students watching a drama lesson. It is important to appreciate that these levels of experience and understanding are not, as it were, embedded in each other(47). Rather are they presented together, side by side (and with, as we shall shortly see, as many other levels as one could name), and by means of the

same methods and practices. They differ only as they are variously interpreted, variously understood(48).

72. We may be inclined to think of teachers and pupils doing drama as if it were some kind of activity that teachers and pupils do over and above being teachers and pupils. We may feel that because we are teachers and pupils whilst we present strangers and priests, the teachers and pupils are, in some way, more real. We have already seen how the creation of teaching situations is a managed accomplishment(49), but we still think (when we think about it all) that we are teachers and pupils doing some drama. It is not silly to think in this way, it is part of the means by which we uphold the facticity of the social life, but it does make it difficult for us to appreciate that these two aspects of social experience are produced by the same methods and practices and that both are 'managed accomplishments'. Whilst we are keenly aware that our dramatic presentations will wither away without constant attention, we feel that our roles as teachers and pupils will endure (at least until 'going home time').

73. By treating the experience of teachers and pupils as real we present it as real, and we invest it with a durability which outlasts our individual attempts to present it. This 'life' goes on even without us because we have 'institutionalised' the experience of school and can draw upon all kinds of 'props and sets' to demonstrate, and stand as signs of, its stability.



There is also a time for schooling. The whole fabric and history of our school system (the buildings, curricula, bells, blackboards, grades, scales, examinations, everything) provides a kind of 'rugged context' within which we see our activities as real, and within which they are readily and instantly made meaningful. Because of this imposing and insistent context in which all school activities are wrapped, our experience of school is instantly recoverable. Further, we may have to work very hard whilst in school to present situations which are not seen as part of schooling. Old schools have been sold and 'turned into' homes. It can be done, but it takes quite a lot of work and many changes have to be made. Even then, they are often called the 'The Old School'(50).

74. But still, schools, teachers and pupils, bells, blackboards, grades and scales do not simply exist and schools are only buildings when school is out. School starts and ends, there are breaks and holidays, half days and occasional days; teachers may take sabbaticals and early retirement; children leave, maybe they are suspended. We are not stuck with schooling, nor yet with being teachers and pupils. Indeed, we are inclined to think of school as being in some way embedded in society. We think of it as a place of preparation for the real world or as place which is out of touch with 'reality' ('Just you wait until you get into the real world, then you'll find out what life's all about'). It

can appear like a rather large piece of drama which we engage in frequently and regularly (at least, for part of our lives) and which has become very well established. It is well understood, we know exactly what to do, we play our parts without a thought and we seem to get better and better the more we go to 'school'.

75. Of course, activities which take place within such institutions are bound to be invested with a sense of 'reality' which seems to outlast the individual members' interests and attention(51). But this does not mean that teachers and pupils 'exist', whereas strangers and priests have to be produced. All the paraphernalia of schooling is as dry dust and empty of meaning without the work done by those involved to make it meaningful. After all, we may carry on teaching after the last bell goes and where, in any case, would such considerations stop? Would we be satisfied to say that here are teachers and pupils being strangers and priests, or would we want to go on and say that here are adults and children being teachers and pupils being strangers and priests? All that we are doing, and we are doing it all of the time, is creating situations which make sense. We are presenting ourselves and each other to ourselves and each other, and these presentations may be taken on many different levels and many 'meanings' are available should there be someone by to interpret the presentation actively and with a concern to find it

sensible(52).

76. So, the stranger may be a teacher, as well, an adult, a father, a student and a deputy head. He may be a customer, a patient and an actor. He may be all of these (and as many more as you could name) and all at the same time. It does not mean that he has to present all of these experiences at once, but that they should be recoverable in his activities by those who are concerned to 'see' him in a particular way. In other words, his doctor should still be able to see him as a teacher (should he think to do so) even whilst he knows him as a patient. He could even treat him as a teacher and a patient at the same time, as though he were some kind of 'double being' ('You'd better stay off school for a few days, because this is highly infectious')(53). Further, of course, if this person were to be seen in the town by his doctor, his daughter and one of his pupils, then he would have to be seen in three different ways, and all whilst he was being, say, a customer in a shop. That we can contain these varied activities and presentations within one identity is part of the managed accomplishment, part of the work done to give a sense of stability to our lives. We achieve this by assuming a kind of basic and mysterious being which lurks behind, and engages in, all that we do. It is there wherever we go and through whatever we do and it seems to pull the strings; we then talk and act in ways which uphold that assumption. It is hard to imagine, though, what such a

'being' would be, or from where it could have come. It is certain that we cannot get in touch with it and so we have to be satisfied with looking at the ways in which we manage to sustain this sense of consistent identity. This is what we have been doing in this study.

77. However, although we present this 'personality' through many different roles in our everyday experience and by the same methods and practices which we use to present make-believe experience, there are differences. We cannot say that the teacher's role as a stranger in the drama is the same as his role as a teacher in everyday life. After all, it would be very strange if the pupil who met him in the shop treated him as the stranger who shared their experiences on the mountain. There is a difference here, but the difference seems to be in the way in which we treat certain aspects of our experience and not in the manner of its production. We might usefully ask, how is it that we invest some parts of the managed experience with a stability which lasts over time and is 'real in its consequences'? How do we make particular pieces of our experience seem real?(54)

78. One way, as we have seen, is to 'institutionalise' aspects of the everyday context so that they appear to have a stability beyond the work done by those involved to make them seem real. In part, this seems to come about according to the frequency with which such presentations are made and the universal quality of those presentations. Schooling, for instance, is highly

institutionalised because a lot of it is done (and has been for a long time) and it is done by a lot of people (55). However, in the end, it seems to come down to our agreement to treat certain areas of experience as being 'real'. Ironically, one of the ways by which we do this is to see all other parts of the managed accomplishment as 'make-believe'. In other words we treat them, even whilst living through them, as collaborative presentations. So, in our fictions we treat experience as experience may be; something created and presented by those involved. Drama, and all forms of fiction, may then be seen as a necessary part of our ability to have a 'real' and meaningful life(56). It is not just clever to say that without a fictional world there could be no sense of reality. Indeed, this conclusion seems to be true in at least two ways.

79. In one sense, our dramatic presentations (and all our other fictions) may be seen as a means of coping with those experiences which threaten our assumptions about a basically meaningful world. This means that a person can get away with presenting all kinds of strange and contrary situations for so long as he is seen to be 'only doing drama'. The important thing, of course, is that he demonstrates clearly through his activities that he is 'only acting', otherwise other measures might have to be taken to uphold the facticity of everyday life and account for his behaviour. One of the ways in which we can agree about those areas of experience which are

to be treated as real is to show clearly when we are involved in the presentation of the make-believe. By treating this as 'unreal', by treating it as a kind of 'representation' and as something without implications across other areas of our experience, we can avoid confronting an awkward, challenging and ultimately sense-destroying conclusion; that all areas of experience (everyday and make-believe) are produced in the same way and have within their production the same degree of 'reality'(57). After all, the social life would quickly crumble if we could all be priests, and just as we wanted. More important, the social life would never have got going in the first place, and we may see that this treating of dramatic experience as different from everyday experience is necessary if we are to have faith in our world and find it meaningful.

80. This in turn, means that we have to be able to deal with those contributions and presentations which threaten the sense of facticity which surrounds and pervades (and makes meaningful) our everyday experience; those activities, in fact, which treat experience as a managed accomplishment. It is essential that we know when we are dealing with fiction or we shall have no idea of what to call real. If we did not see certain aspects of our experience (say, for instance, the bones and tombstones piece) as drama, we would have to treat those involved in its presentation as fools or mad people. That would be another way to discount their

contributions and so maintain the stability of the everyday life. The interesting question then becomes, what do we need to do in order to show that people are engaged in presenting experience dramatically? As we have already seen(58), the whole business of theatre is directed towards making this clear, but what of these 'by-volcano dwelling' children? How do you know they are doing drama? Because I told you they were, or because the activity is taking place in the school hall? Or is it because they would be acting very strangely if we did not account for their activities by treating them as make-believe? And how far can we go? Could I, say, visit my local supermarket and do some drama for myself about a person going to a local supermarket and buying some food? And if I did, would the girl who took my money be working in the everyday or make-believe reality? To answer questions of this kind we would have to concentrate upon the way in which those involved treated the experience. It would not be enough to look simply at what they did, as if one activity were given as real and the other only make-believe(59).

81. Clearly, whilst it is right that we should treat these two levels of experience and understanding as different, it is important that we should appreciate something of the way in which they differ. If we do not, we may come to feel that dramatic experience is less 'real' than everyday experience, and not to be taken too seriously. This, in itself, might not be so

important (and I do not want to suggest that our dramatic experiences should have the kind of consequences for our lives that our everyday ones do; we cannot let them if they are to be used to uphold the facticity of the everyday life) but it would be a shame if it prevented us from seeing how drama can put people directly in touch with everyday experience as it draws upon the same methods and practices to produce sensible situations. That is important.

82. But this is not all, for our make-believe activities serve to uphold the facticity of the everyday world in another way. As they are seen as representations they give a sense of stability to that which they appear to represent. There is a real world filled with real people, real events, relationships and emotions which we can copy, and draw upon, to feed our dramatic presentations. In this way our fictional, make-believe experience is grounded in a real world by reference to which it is seen as meaningful. This is to view drama from the layman's perspective(60) within which it is seen to be recreating (and therefore validating) a world beyond our individual perceptions. However, there is a more significant point to be made here, for the narrative form of fiction provides us with a model for accounts which describe and give a structure to our everyday experience. In other words instead of reflecting the way life is, the narrative provides us with a means of describing that life, and the means to



find it meaningful. It is the procedure which we have been uncovering in this study and to which we will return in the next two chapters(61).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVERYDAY AND MAKE-BELIEVE EXPERIENCE.

83. It is possible to engage very successfully in the business of presenting 'teachers and pupils doing drama' whilst failing to create 'actively meaningful' dramatic contexts(62). It seems a shame, but quite a lot of our drama may be of this kind. In such instances those involved are holding to a point of reference beyond the drama itself and using the dramatic context to recreate, perhaps even copy, 'real life' situations and models. The drama is in danger of becoming a vehicle for them to show what they can do. This kind of activity can be as restricting and sterile as trying to present dramatic situations for an audience, for in both cases the actors are working for, or towards, ends which are beyond the concern of the dramatic context(63). It does seem to be important that we work to 'shift' the meaning making business out of the school setting (teachers and pupils doing drama) and towards making visible those contexts we are concerned to present dramatically. After all, the institutionalised nature of schooling, and our natural attitude towards everyday experience, will be sufficient to ensure that the 'teachers and pupils' are quite able to take care of themselves and be instantly recoverable the moment they are required.

84. The 'doing of drama' is constantly threatening, ever likely to be intrusive, and ever likely to detract from the purpose of that drama which is the presentation of dramatic experience. This struggle to get beyond the production of drama is not confined to our experience of drama in schools. Anyone who has acted before an audience knows when a part 'takes flight' and seems to have a life of its own. All the learning of words and moves, all the discussion and the teasing out of motives, all the hours of rehearsal are no longer available, and the actor feels involved with his audience and the rest of the cast in the creation of something new and immediate. There is a real sense of 'living through' the moment and the actor seems to be working at an intuitive level. Unfortunately, for most of us such moments are rare and we are much more likely to be caught up in the mechanics of the production, tied into the business of putting on plays or doing drama. Denholm Elliott, who must have had his share of the former, also talks of an interesting evening when opening in a production of 'The Seagull' in New York (64). Throughout the performance he was aware only of aspects of the production (gaps between the stage flooring, the overly applied make-up of the other actors, the shallow flats of the set) and could seem to capture nothing of the atmosphere of Chekhov's Russia. It was as if his 'first night nerves' had bound him as an actor in the theatre, and left him stranded and

unable to get into his part. He was, as it were, overwhelmed by the occasion, and locked into the everyday reality of actors and theatres and false sets and first nights. All of this is part of theatre, part of 'doing drama', but it is not part of the dramatic presentation of experience. It is important to keep the sense making activities of those involved (and that includes an audience) attentive to the situations we are concerned to create and present through our drama. It is important to ensure that everything we do as drama teachers or actors serves to elaborate the context of our drama. It is very important, and it is a shame if we end up just putting on plays(65).

85. It is, of course, impossible to create situations dramatically and not contribute to the business of doing drama, and though the teacher's attention must obviously be directed in part towards the way in which the drama is working (as he is a teacher guiding a learning situation), it would be wrong to assume that the children will not also have interests beyond their roles in the drama. They may not stand 'astride the two realities' in the way that the teacher does but they can still work through the dramatic context in order to contribute directly and deliberately to the business of teachers and pupils doing drama. The important thing is that they contribute through the dramatic context as the teacher must do, and not in a way which will threaten it. One of the concerns of the children, for instance,

will be to ensure that the drama will flourish and that there will a place for them within it. Let us see how this can happen.

CONTRIBUTIONS WORKING TO ELABORATE BOTH LEVELS.

86. In this extract, the priests have decided to let the stranger climb the mountain. One of them tells him that there will be 'someone following you to make sure you reach the top'(p.37: 18-19). A little later comes this piece;

10 Julia. Great Priest God, who will be going with  
 11 him?  
 12 Ian. One of the servants.  
 13 Teacher. Does that mean one of these people who've  
 14 been so friendly to me?  
 15 Ian. (Mmm.  
 16 Bev. (Which.....servant?  
 17 Mark. We have not decided yet.  
 18 Shirley. Do you know when you will?  
 19 Mark. Tomorrow, before he sets off.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 38)

87. Now this contribution is a perfectly sensible part of the dramatic situation and Julia's question, in line 10, is an appropriate response to Mark's earlier statement, 'There'll be someone following you to make sure you reach the top'(p.37: 18-19). However, Beverley, Julia and Shirley have an extra interest, for they are anxious to preserve their own places within the drama, and they see themselves as having no 'part to play' as the stranger makes his way up the mountain accompanied only by 'someone'. No one wants to wait until tomorrow to find out who will be going, and a little later we can see the teacher returning to the same topic;

(p.40)

22 Teacher. Who's going to come (with me/  
 23 Shirley. (Yes, but/  
 24 Teacher. that's what  
 25 I want to know.  
 26 Julia. We'll find out/  
 27 (Do you want me to  
 28 Bev. go and ask? Mark. Don't know  
 29 Julia. (in the morning. if the great  
 (p.41)  
 01 Teacher. Oh go and see if Mark. god will  
 02 you can find out. recommend him  
 03 Teacher. Be ever so good as one of/  
 04 to them though, Ian. \*\*\*\*\* ours.  
 05 don't disturb Peter. Yes?  
 06 them. Bev. Who will be  
 07 going with  
 08 him...Peter?  
 09 Mark. We have  
 10 decided that  
 11 the one in  
 12 blue will.  
 13 Teacher. That's you isn't it?  
 14 Oh, I'm pleased...  
 15 what's going..what will happen to you  
 16 two then, when/  
 17 Julia. We/  
 18 Teacher. Oh, I'm sorry....  
 19 Julia. We wait at the bottom.  
 20 Teacher. Do you...will you be able  
 21 to follow it  
 22 all the way? Ian. Shall we  
 23 Have you got give him the  
 24 telescopes? Can good boat?  
 25 you see what we're Peter. Yes.  
 26 doing? Mark. We must go  
 27 Bev. Mmm. Yes. and tell him.  
 28 Julia. We pray for you;  
 29 for the god to help you.

(p.42)

01 Shirley. One prays for you, and one prays for me;  
 02 wherever we are.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 40-42)

88. Clearly, the teacher is anxious to get this business settled, and he wants the choice to be made now. He is concerned that (if possible) the decision be made properly, which means that it be made here where it makes sense, and not later on, after this piece of drama is over and before the next stage begins. It is good if

decisions about the drama can be made from within the dramatic context for then they are an aspect of that which is learned and a part of the topic. The children, however, are more directly concerned. They, like the teacher, want to keep the drama going and so they, too, look ahead and prepare for the future. But they are also concerned that they should have something to do and a part to play, so they take advantage of their positions within the drama to work on the drama.

'Which.....servant?'(p.38: 16) asks Beverley, and Shirley wants to know when they will decide (p.38: 18).

89. Here is an example of that 'generative force' which seems to be a part of all sense making engagements, and which is ever present in drama of this kind. Of course, every contribution is designed (and made) to sustain the drama, to keep it going and move it onwards, but sometimes, as in cases like this, it is as if those involved were able to stand back and watch the drama from within the dramatic context. The same kind of thing happened in the 'waiting time'(66). It is as if they are planning for the future of that drama even whilst they make the dramatic situation visible. We can 'see' them on both levels of understanding. Their contributions work directly to illuminate and make sense of the everyday and dramatic situations. They talk about the drama from within the drama. At times like this, the differences between the two 'presentations' blur and fade, and we are left with our own

interpretations of what is going on. We have to decide for ourselves the level upon which we want to make their contributions sensible and whether we are to treat the experience as 'real' or 'make-believe'.

90. 'We must go and tell him.'(p.41: 26-27), say the priests, as they work their way back into the drama. We do not have to see this contribution on two levels; it makes perfect sense within the dramatic context alone. But it also makes good sense in the everyday situation of children in the school hall 'doing some drama' when the words are seen as a kind of stage direction. Mark, Ian and Peter are moving back into the centre of things and we cannot tell for certain whether they are doing so as 'themselves' or as 'priests'. Now this, as we shall come to see(67), is of considerable significance, but for the moment, it is enough to appreciate that work done about the drama can be done within the drama. We can make our 'production' a part of the context which is created through that production. We can allow the reflexive force of meaning making activities to come into play. We can reach the world of 'The Seagull', Sorin's estate, the park and the lake, and not be left looking at those things which are designed to bring the dramatic experience about. This is well worth striving for.

91. Of course, Julia is disappointed that she has to 'wait at the bottom'(p.41: 19), but because of the way in which the decision was made (by the priests, within

the drama) her disappointment serves to illuminate the dramatic context even as it may be explained in terms of the everyday business of giving people parts in drama. This is not the same as having a disgruntled child starting the next stage of the drama; a child who has only to stand and watch the others through a telescope whilst Shirley gets to climb. Julia, anyway, already has ideas about ways and means of keeping herself involved,

'We pray for you; for the god to help you.' (p.41: 28-29). Shirley, meanwhile, ever mindful of her good fortune in being selected by the priests, can afford to be generous,

'One prays for you, and one prays for me; wherever we are.' (p.42: 01-02). Their concern to be part of the drama is inextricably entwined with their concern to climb the mountain(68). Their ability to illuminate both levels of understanding at once enables us to interpret their activities on both levels;

22                    Ian.     Shall we  
23                                    give him the  
24                                    good boat?  
25                    Peter. Yes.  
26                    Mark. We must go  
27                                    and tell him.

(Extract from the transcript, page 41)

On what level of understanding do these lines work? Are they the words of children discussing the drama and the way it should proceed? Are they priests thinking of the stranger and how they can help him? And before you make up your mind, remember that these words are spoken



'outside' the main part of the drama (in which the stranger and Beverley are talking about telescopes) and were only recoverable through the transcript. The other people in the drama (the teacher in role as the stranger, Shirley, Beverley and Julia) had no idea that they had been uttered. So, where are they now, preparing to climb or in the school hall? What do you make of it?

92. Or, consider the way the transcript continues and ask yourself, as you read it, whether these lines are 'stage directions' telling us how to make the drama work or whether they are part of the dramatic context through which the situation of 'stranger being told by priests what he should do' is made visible. Are the following lines about the drama or are they within the drama? Can you decide, and can you then explain the difference between the everyday and make-believe experiences? See if you can tell which level of understanding these words serve to illuminate.

03 Teacher. Hey look, they're coming...they're coming.  
 04 What do I do?  
 05 All. Bow...go on, bow.  
 06 Teacher. Bow.  
 07 Mark. Tomorrow you will be given the great  
 08 boat to set over the river to get to the  
 09 mountain.  
 10 Ian. (You must not..  
 11 Teacher. (Who takes me across?  
 12 Ian. I will.  
 13 Mark. The servant.  
 14 Teacher. Will they?  
 15 Ian. And me.  
 16 Mark. And/  
 17 Teacher. And you. And..and...then I'm on my  
 18 own, am I; from there?  
 19 Mark. Yes.

20 Ian.            You must not touch the river/  
21 Mark.                          Apart/  
22 Ian.                      or you'll  
23                 be/  
24 Mark.           apart from the servant following you.  
25 Teacher. Right.  
              (Extract from the transcript, p.42)

Well, we could go on, but do you not feel by now that these lines can be understood on different levels and according to the level of reality (everyday or make-believe) within which we choose to treat them? Clearly they are preparing the way in which the drama should go and, at the same time, illuminating the context from within. These lines are both in and about the drama which they serve to make visible and through which they are made meaningful.

93. This happens again and again in this piece of drama but perhaps it is most clearly seen during the 'waiting time' which we have already looked at (69). The stranger and the children, we may remember, were waiting in the early morning. They were waiting to be called by the priests to make the climb, and we have seen the ways in which they presented this waiting. One of the ways is to consider what is to come and look forward to those things that will happen once the waiting is ended. This is a typical 'waiting procedure' and a means by which we can tell that people are waiting. This extract follows immediately upon the 'waiting' piece we looked at earlier and shows the stranger and the children preparing the way in which the drama should go.

(p.50)

18 Julia. You might meet...you might meet some

19 people up there.  
 20 Teacher. Yeah.  
 21 Julia. They'll try and put you off but don't  
 22 take any notice of them.  
 23 Shirley. Push through them.  
 24 Teacher. Really?  
 25 Shirley. We'll tell you what to do.  
 26 Julia. They'll...they'll show you bones and  
 27 tombstones and all sorts of things.  
 28 Teacher. Well that's (not very nice, is it?  
 29 Bev. (It's tricks.

(p.51)

01 Julia. It's all tricks....they're all rubber.  
 02 They feel like real things but they're  
 03 all made of rubber.  
 04 Teacher. It makes me (a bit nervous. I'm not at  
 05 sure at all..sure..  
 06 Shirley. (It's to make you \*\*\*\*\*  
 07 put (off.  
 08 Teacher. (I'm happy about that.  
 09 Julia. If you rub two bones together you'll  
 10 hear like..a metal scraping.  
 11 Teacher. Really?  
 12 Julia. If you rub those together you won't hear  
 13 anything.  
 14 Teacher. Well, perhaps we won't meet them. Do  
 15 you always meet them?  
 16 All. Yeah.  
 17 Teacher. Do you? (Oh golly.  
 18 Bev. (They're always there.  
 19 Julia. (They're always there.  
 20 Teacher. They never told me about that before,  
 21 did they?  
 22 Julia. There's some nice people further up  
 23 though.  
 24 Shirley. Yes, very (nice people.  
 25 Teacher. (Are there?  
 26 Oh, this takes so long. I wish I could  
 27 get going now.  
 28 Julia. Gosh, they should be calling for you any  
 29 minute now.

(p.52)

01 Shirley. Any minute (yes.  
 02 Teacher. (\*\*\*\*\* they?  
 03 Shirley. They're not, they'll be/  
 04 [the bells rings]  
 05 Teacher. What's that? There's (the bell.  
 06 Shirley. (Yeah, come now/  
 07 Teacher. What do I  
 08 do?  
 09 Shirley. I'll hide it.  
 10 [there is a lot of bustle as they get to  
 11 their feet, hide the tape recorder and go  
 12 towards the boat]  
 13 Teacher. Well, what do I do?  
 14 Julia. Tell \*\*\*\*\* again.

15 Teacher. Do I? Just the same as before? Well  
 16 I'll follow you. You tell me where...  
 17 show me where to go.  
 18 [they move to the side of the boat]  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 50-52)

94. During this extract, they are continuing to give character to the 'waiting' and busy putting one another in place (the stranger who does not know what is required of him, the guides as experts who have been this way before, the priests for whom they must wait). All this we have seen, as we looked at the passage which came immediately before(70). However, whilst all this is going on, they are using the time to consider, and prepare for, the drama which is yet to come. They are making sure of a future for themselves within the drama but they are also preparing for the way in which that future is to be handled. So, as they get the stranger ready for what might happen, they are also planning the things which will happen. They get him ready by preparing him for all the people (parts for them to play) he will have to meet. In their preparations they show how they would like the drama to develop. They have plenty of ideas, and it is interesting that all their ideas are used later as they get to present the climb up the mountain. Here they are, as they are introduced,

'You might meet...you might meet some  
 people up there.' (p.50: 18-19)  
 'They'll try and put you off.' (p.50: 21)  
 'Push through them.' (p.50: 23)  
 'We'll tell you what to do.' (p.50: 25)  
 'They'll show you bones and  
 tombstones and all sorts of things.' (p.50: 26-27)  
 'It's all tricks....they're all

rubber.'	(p.51: 01)
'There's some nice people further	
up though.'	(p.51: 22-23)

Here, and within a few moments, they present those things which will later be made to happen.

95. Of course, it would have been in order to stop the drama (say, just before this piece was reached), reflect upon what happened and then go on to consider what might happen next. Sometimes this is the best way; sometimes it is the only way. But it seems worthwhile, when it is possible, to take advantage of our ability to contribute sensibly on the two different levels in order to guide our progress from within(71). Apart from the value of keeping the drama going, this way of working draws upon the generative force which seems to infuse sense making activities. This, in turn, ensures that the drama progresses in a manner which those involved can appreciate and understand. After all, they helped to make the dramatic situation visible, and they understand what is happening and they understand what is going on when they make these suggestions. Furthermore, these suggestions are made in the light of the developing context, they are appropriate contributions which 'make sense', and this gives them validity and justifies their inclusion for further treatment. They come from within the dramatic situation and they are not imposed upon it from without. Once again we may see that drama does not need to look to a 'real' world in order to prosper.

THE DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE EVERYDAY LIFE.

96. It is not only as people prepare for the future in their drama that we catch a glimpse of the different levels of understanding working together. Sometimes aspects of our everyday experience are transformed by the drama so that they may be seen differently within the dramatic context. An obvious example of this kind of transformation would be the chairs used for the priests' altar and the cable across the floor marking the edge of their boat(72). Clearly these things are 'seen' according to the context in which they are considered. So, for those people walking through the school hall during a drama lesson, the chair is still a chair even though they may appreciate it is being used in the drama as a 'prop', and in both cases it illuminates the everyday context of schooling. The cable, though, will be seen (if it is seen at all) as part of the recording equipment and they are unlikely to realise that it has extra significance within the drama. If these visitors want to see what this chair 'stands for' in the drama they will have to stay a while and watch that they may see how it is being used. After all, there will not be a label attached to tell them what it is, and sometimes (as when the drama has shifted away from the priests) there will be no work being done to transform the chair into an altar. It will just sit there as a chair dependent upon its institutionalised significance. If these visitors to the school hall stay

for long enough they may even come to see the significance of the cable within the drama. All the time, though, the visitors will be using the chair and the cable to illuminate the business of teachers and pupils doing drama, which, of course, is an activity within the everyday experience. However, they may, if they get really involved, if they are captivated by the drama, lose 'sight of' the chair and come to see only an altar. Even a chair (stubborn and unforgiving item, purposeful over centuries) can lose its 'chairness' through 'good' work(73). It need not stand for an altar, it can become one. Afterwards, they would be able to cope with this threatening muddle (chair and not chair?) by treating what they had seen as drama. In this way we can have all 'worlds' and still be in charge of our wits.

97. Sometimes we can see objects in the course of being transformed by the drama. We can see the transformation take place within the drama. We see, then, how cunningly people may 'play' with the different levels of understanding. This short extract comes from the middle of the 'waiting' time. We have looked at it already in another context(74),

(p.49)

12 Julia. I don't think you'll be (able to take  
 13 your...er..  
 14 Mark. (Your \*\*\*\*\*  
 15 Julia. ...tape..recorder..  
 16 Teacher. Won't I?  
 17 Julia. up with you because they'll..they'll  
 18 take everything off you apart from/  
 19 Teacher. Will they?  
 20 Julia. You know what you've gone/

21 Shirley. And then we'll  
 22 maybe (can hide it/  
 23 Teacher. (Well....yeah.  
 24 Shirley. when you/  
 25 Teacher. I'd like it you know, because it  
 26 reminds me of things that we saw and  
 27 talked about, you know, on the (way up.  
 28 Shirley. (I'll  
 29 hide it.  
 (p.50)  
 01 Julia. Could you put it under your belt?  
 02 Shirley. Yeah.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 49-50)

98. Now this is an awkward moment. It is a daring one, for they are playing with the two levels of understanding, and Julia knows it. She is drawing the tape recorder, which the teacher carries with him as part of his recording equipment, into the dramatic context. This is not like the chair, for it serves a 'present purpose' in the everyday experience of students recording some drama; now Julia wants it to work as a tape recorder in the drama. It is already being used as a tape recorder in the drama hall, and she wants it to be seen as a tape recorder in the dramatic situation,

'I don't think you'll be able to take your  
 ....tape recorder.' (p.49: 12-15). She is not letting the drama transform the tape recorder (in the way that the chair became an altar, and the cable the edge of the boat), and so it presents a very real threat to the dramatic context. It creates a threat because it enters the drama 'wrapped up' in another level of 'reality'. This tape recorder with its microphone, its hum and its whirring wheels, belongs very firmly to the everyday experience of teachers and pupils, and students studying teachers and pupils. It is quite likely that



the tape recorder worried them from the start of the drama, not because they were coy about being recorded but because it would 'tie them' into the everyday world. It was a constant reminder of what they were doing. For this reason the tape recorder had to be coped with from the beginning and this meant drawing it into the dramatic setting or leaving it unattended. Unless an 'intruder' of this kind is accounted for and its presence explained, it will constantly threaten the drama. At first the children simply, but deliberately, ignored it. Now, though, as they gain confidence and as the dramatic situation becomes more firmly established, they feel able to risk drawing the tape recorder (which is an insistent reminder of other realities) into their drama. However, its significance has to change or else it will be like a teacher trying to work within the drama but without working in role. Anything (any person) which is to have a place in the drama, which is to elaborate the context and not destroy it, must first be transformed by the drama. It has to be recreated and re-presented(75).

99. This is why Julia was taking a bit of risk when she dragged the teacher's tape recorder into the drama, for it was working, and would have to continue to work, to elaborate the everyday context. It is rather like trying to use a chair for an altar whilst another child is sitting on it watching some drama. Something, clearly had to be done. Now, although the tape recorder

itself was not transformed (as the school hall 'became' the priests' temple and a mountainside) and remains a working, recording tape recorder, they manage to deal with it by giving it significance within the dramatic context as well. They transform the 'meaning' which the tape recorder has for them. They account for the tape recorder within the dramatic context,

'I'd like it you know, because it reminds me of the things we saw and talked about, you know, on the way up.' (p.49: 25-27). The

children explain why it has to be hidden,

'...they'll..they'll take everything off you apart from/' (p.49: 17-18). They even manage

to take over the responsibility for the tape recorder,

28 Shirley. (I'll (p.49)  
29 hide it.

01 Julia. Could you put it under your belt? (p.50)  
02 Shirley. Yeah.  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 49-50)

At the end of this section, as they walk towards the boat, Shirley takes the tape recorder from the stranger and hides it behind her so that the priests will not see it. As she does so, she elaborates the dramatic context of 'priests and strangers and those who would look after strangers'. The tape recorder is a part of the dramatic situation, and Shirley keeps it for the rest of the drama. There is nothing the teacher can do about that.

100. This may make us aware of another element in this business of 'playing with realities'. When Julia drops the tape recorder into the drama she gives the teacher a

bit of a shock. There is a sense in which, through the safety of the drama, she is challenging him. She knows well enough what this thing is doing hanging about his neck, and she will not have forgotten that he told them all beforehand to 'ignore the tape recorder'. She enjoys the opportunity to put him on the spot. In fact, her challenge has a double edge, for not only does she bring in the tape recorder which means he has to account for it in terms of the drama, but, having done so, she tells him he will not be able to keep it. Julia and the others know how important the recorder is to the teacher; they know that he must keep it and cannot even turn it off. They know that the recording (of which this is the transcript that we are considering) is the purpose for them being there. He is in a very difficult position. Luckily, Shirley offers a way out and the teacher in role as the stranger is very quick to take it.

101. These children are enjoying their drama and they are playing with the levels of understanding. It would be a brave person who could draw a line between these levels and say, this one is 'real' whilst the other only 'make-believe'. Of course, we can see how we treat the experiences as different, but that is not the same as saying they are different. Only consider the way in which the different levels are produced and made visible by the work of those involved. We are not looking at real life, and then copies and representations of real

life but the production of experience and the manner in which certain aspects of that production are treated as though they existed beyond our capacity to make them visible. A good example (given in another context) may be taken from Rom Harre's work. Whilst talking of the power of talk, he considers how a group of people

'turn up on Saturday afternoon in a church. They talk together for twenty minutes or so. By a kind of miracle the future has been pre-empted. The marriage has been performed. Think of all the emotional, economic and other consequences which flow from twenty minutes of a peculiar kind of talk'(76).

However, if that same group had turned up the night before to have a practice, to go over the words of the ceremony, and had done so, their words would have had no such consequences. One could even imagine the practice going very well with no errors or mistakes and the real ceremony being riddled with problems, yet the one would count and the other would not. What difference is there? What is there beyond our agreement to treat one as a rehearsal and the other as the real thing? It is, of course, only because we treat these levels of understanding as being different levels of experience, that the children in this drama can have such fun(77).

#### UNDERSTANDING SITUATIONS ON DIFFERENT LEVELS.

102. Another way in which to consider levels of understanding in dramatic and everyday experience, is to see how it is that members working to create a 'shared situation' in which they feel involved and 'at home' may yet understand it in different ways. Here is a passage

taken from the account referred to at the beginning of this chapter:

....one of the first things which becomes apparent as people are interviewed about shared events in this way is that they often seem to have 'misunderstood' one another and yet failed to appreciate at the time that they were doing so. Time and again in the discussion they disagreed about the intentions of other people and regularly they interpreted the situation in different ways, yet they never felt that they did not understand one another or that the situation made no sense. They felt, on the contrary, that they had shared in an event about which they could talk in a reasonable way(78).

103. How can it be that 'shared in common situations' can accommodate different levels of understanding and yet be 'meaningful' to all involved? Is it just that we 'see things differently' and that some of us are more sensitive to what is going on than others? Or is it that the 'shared in common' aspect of the experience is part of the managed accomplishment, part of the way in which we demonstrate that our different levels of understanding are drawn from a 'reality' beyond our individual perceptions? Are our perceptions about a 'real', shared in common experience, or do we have to work through our interactions with one another to demonstrate that they are(79)?

104. The next extract comes from the first part of the drama. The children have introduced the climbers, the treasure and the great god. They have disclosed the kind of threat the climbers represent. Now the teacher in role as the stranger is getting them to consider the nature of their understanding of the god.

(p.26)

24 Teacher. And this great god that put them up  
 25 there....do you ever see him?  
 26 All. No/  
 27 No/  
 28 No.  
 29 Teacher. How do you know he put them there  
(p.27)

01 Teacher. then?  
 02 Ian. I do.  
 03 Teacher. How do you know?  
 04 Shirley. We just believe in him.  
 05 Teacher. Do you?  
 06 Julia. We believe in him, yes.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 26-27)

105. It would be reasonable to wonder how long it would take to bring an eight year-old child to express the concept of belief as an aspect of religious knowledge. It is not easy for children of this age to get beyond a simple 'because it's in the Bible' approach. However, by being asked to account for her knowledge of the great god, by being 'put upon the spot' within the dramatic context, Shirley copes by 'falling back upon' belief, 'We just believe in him'(p.27: 04). Now this response was 'thrust upon her' by the circumstances of the dramatic engagement (the teacher in role as the stranger apparently refusing to accept Ian's contribution, his repetition of the question, 'How do you know?', Shirley's own uncertainty, etc.) and she had to come up with something(80). We may see here, the match between the kind of knowledge which is being dealt with (religious knowledge, characterised by belief) and the situation within which that knowledge makes sense to those involved, the situation within which it is useful. These children may well have found it difficult to

demonstrate this level of understanding in a classroom lesson, and yet it seems to 'slip out' here without a thought. It comes as part of the accounting procedure whereby they make the situation visible and meaningful. This does not mean that Shirley and Julia ('We believe in him, yes.' p.27: 06) now understand the nature of belief within religious experience, but they have made a beginning. In order to use language in this way, Shirley must recognise the situation as one in which the language of belief would be appropriate. When she makes use of such language it 'colours' the situation and shifts the level of meaning. She demonstrates her understanding by speaking properly. She learns, even as she contributes properly, and it is this kind of force which may be generated when the 'academic task structure' becomes an aspect of the 'social participation structure'. Both are presented through the managed accomplishment, and that which is learned is part of the situation through which it is learned. At such times, the child's knowledge comes of an understanding of what is going on and an ability to contribute. It comes of the methods and practices used to make the situation appear meaningful, and this 'meaning' is not, as it were, 'grafted on' from outside(81).

106. However, our concern at the moment is with the nature of Shirley's understanding and the level upon which she makes sense of what is happening. We may

already feel that Ian is not seeing things in quite the same way. He is not talking about belief, but about certain knowledge ('I do' p.27: 02), and because of this he is 'ignored' by the teacher in role as the stranger who finds his contribution unhelpful. We shall be able to see though, that Ian does not give up nor change his level of understanding so easily;

07 Ian. 'cause you see him on a night....his  
 08 great crown...going...um..  
 09 Mark. Against the sky/  
 10 Ian. against the sky.  
 11 Shirley. Yeah.  
 12 Teacher. What, just up in the air?  
 13 Julia. Mmm/  
 14 Shirley. Yeah.  
 15 Bev. It's round.....and it/  
 16 Julia. It glitters around.  
 17 Ian. And it's \*\*\*\*\*  
 18 Teacher. I see.  
 19 [two second pause]  
 20 Shirley. And he watches over them.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 27).

107. Ian is clearly working on a different level of understanding. He asks (as would any 'doubting Thomas') for proof. So, he treats the stranger's question as a request for 'certain knowledge' drawn out of direct experience and responds accordingly,

'cause you see him on a night' (p.27 07). This comes directly from his previous assertion that he knew the god put the treasures upon the mountain, an assertion which prompted the teacher in role as the stranger to ask him how he knew (and upon what level he knew).

108. Now, we have a good example here of the context being altered in order to accommodate what appears to be



a contradiction within the dramatic context. After all, a little earlier everyone had agreed that they never saw the great god (p.26: 24-28), and yet here is Ian, in his search for truth, in his concern to 'validate the context', telling the stranger that you can see the god. These people are producing different and contrasting situations (gods which demand faith in their existence and gods which can be seen), as they present different levels of understanding. They are not simply seeing things differently, but producing different situations and they have not yet managed to present them as aspects of a shared in common experience. It is enlightening to see how Ian and the others manage to cope with this.

109. The first thing Ian does is to describe the kind of 'special' circumstances within which it is possible to 'see' the great god, '...on a night.'(p.27: 07). He then shifts the attention away from the god and towards 'his great crown'(p.27: 07-08), by which we can 'see', or infer, the presence of the god. The other children are quick to come to his assistance, and Mark immediately takes up the idea of 'special' circumstances as he describes how the god's crown may be seen 'against the sky'(p.27: 09). Beverley, too, goes to some trouble to draw attention in words and actions to the great god's crown (p.27: 15) which everyone can see and which, as Julia says, 'glitters around'(p.27: 16).

110. 'Shirley and the other girls, who were happy to let their 'belief' describe the dramatic context, are

concerned as well to help Ian build up and present his 'proof'. I think this is very interesting. It is done to maintain the sense of group unity and the experience of a shared in common background, but it also works to strengthen the situation they are creating and which had been threatened by Ian's apparently contradictory contribution. So, although Ian meant to say, 'you can see him', his words were not taken in this way, and Ian and the other children accounted for them by drawing attention to certain changes in the dramatic context. In this manner they modified his contribution and made it meaningful. 'I see'(p.27: 18), says the stranger.

111. Now, these 'changes' are not only seen in terms of physical properties of the context (night time, glittering crowns against the sky, etc.) but also within the intellectual aspect, for they allowed Ian to 'know for certain' through inference rather than by direct experience. The situation afforded Ian the kind of proof he needed and still enabled the others to express their 'belief'. So, whilst Beverley and Shirley could help, they could not change the situation beyond the point at which their 'belief' in the great god ceased to be meaningful (as it would, of course, if they could actually point to him). They appear to give Ian support so that the drama should not crumble, but are careful to focus attention only upon the god's crown. The girls manage to preserve the 'meaning' the occasion has for them, whilst yet helping Ian to interpret it on another

level. We may see here how the dramatic situation manages to protect itself through a system of 'constant but constrained accommodation' by which 'threats' and 'mistakes' are coped with, and remedied, from within. These 'threats' and 'mistakes', for so long as they are not too outrageous, are made into another aspect of the developing dramatic context and can be accounted for and explained even as they serve to make sensible what is going on. These mistakes are misunderstandings, or rather, different understandings of what is happening and they have to be dealt with.

112. It would be a mistake to think that this is just the way the conversation 'came out', or to conclude that because the people involved could not describe the methods whereby they made the situation familiar, it all took place by chance. They may not consciously employ the situated practices we have looked at, but that does not mean that their language and actions are not ordered, methodical and bound by the conventions of the context within which they are working. We have to move away from the idea that these children 'have something to say', and then go on to find the words to say it(82). Rather, they are contributing to a context which they find sensible and familiar, and they see what they say (and who they are and what they mean) even as they speak. They do not appear to deliberate over the use of each word or phrase, but that does not mean they are not responding to the context and taking care to speak

appropriately. Indeed, that we can make sense of what is going on (as those involved can make sense) shows that these people are taking part properly, that they are taking account of the context and contributing within that context. Similarly, they must be making sense of each other's words and actions within that context and seeing them as meaningful in the light of that context.

113. In the same way, it is rather easy to level at a study of this kind the accusation that it is being 'too clever', and simply 'reading into' the situation things that were never intended by those people involved in creating the dramatic experience. In other words, the study is busy about the business of creating its own sense of meaningfulness. On one level, of course, this is quite true and we may feel that there is no more but that which we can properly make of situations. However, it is not my intention to present an account of what is going on, as if it were a definitive view. Clearly that would suggest that the 'meaning' of a situation could be encapsulated and then set down for all time. Rather this is an attempt to show how meanings are managed in drama and how situations may be variously interpreted and upon different levels. This is the case for those involved, and for those who would look on and try to make sense of what is happening. In neither case, though, can they be seen on any level or taken in any way, for we have to make sense of what is going on, and

that means taking account of, and then contributing to, a developing situation. We have to work 'properly', for not only does the situation have to make sense, but contributions have to make sense within the situation(83).

114. It is interesting to see how the children finally manage to articulate their understanding of the situation, and how they are able to handle sensibly the concepts of 'stranger', initiation and 'group rights and cohesiveness'. This extract comes from the end of the first section of the drama.

(p.28)

17 Teacher. What would I have to do to  
18 be able to come and live here?  
19 Shirley. Believe in our god and do our ways/  
20 Julia. \*\*\*\*\*/  
21 Ian. Climb  
22 the great mountain and if he doesn't,  
23 he won't be (one of our people.  
24 Mark. (Learn to live like we do.  
25 Teacher. Is that what I have to do? Did all of  
26 you have to do that..at one time...or  
27 do...don't you have to do it?  
28 Mark. Yes.  
29 Shirley. We will when we get older.

(p.29)

01 Teacher. Mmm...you'll have to climb the great  
02 mountain?  
03 All. Yes/  
04 Mmm.  
05 Teacher. And as long as you get down all right,  
06 you're a member of the group?  
07 All. Yes/  
08 Mmm.  
09 Ian. We..we're true people 'cause/  
10 Mark. Yes/  
11 Ian. our.....  
12 fathers and mothers were and if we go  
13 up now we'll probably be safe.  
14 Teacher. I see....but me being a stranger/  
15 Ian. Mmm/  
16 Teacher. would  
17 I have to do this?  
18 All. Mmm..yes.

19 Julia. You'll probably have/  
 20 Teacher. Well, I'll have to give  
 21 some thought to that because/  
 22 Bev. If you don't,  
 23 you've got to go.....to go away to  
 24 another country.  
 25 Teacher. Well, I realise that so I'll have  
 26 (to give/  
 27 All. (Mmm/  
 28 Yes/  
 29 Teacher. it a bit of thought. (p.30)

01 Julia. Mmm..yes.  
 02 Teacher. Before I decide whether to go or not.  
 03 Some. Yes.  
 04 Shirley. And then you'll have to build your own  
 05 house.  
 06 Teacher. All right.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 28-30)

115. When the teacher in role as the stranger asks the children what he would have to do in order that he might be accepted by them and so come and live with them in their village, Shirley replies,

'Believe in our god and do our ways.' (p.28: 19).

In an instant, she points to all that they have done and to the meaning which the situation has for her. This contribution encompasses the nature of unity (shared belief) and the business of 'making strangers' (as, people with different ways) and it shows an understanding of the situation which appears to be remarkable. Much is contained in these few words, but not because Shirley 'put it there'. It would be silly to say that she thought carefully about what she wanted to say and the way in which she wanted to say it, as though she 'meant' something and then set about telling us what she meant so that we could take her meaning. It would be silly to say that Shirley 'meant' all that we

can read into these words ('Believe in our god and do our ways'). However, that it can be understood on this level by us (who, with time and the transcript before us, can tease out extra layers of significance), even as it makes sense to Ian and the other children, indicates that these words were used by Shirley in a suitable way and in accordance with the situation within which she found herself and which we are able to share. She was involved in the dramatic situation and sensitive to its demands, and her response came out of the situation (which, after all, she had helped to create) and was apt and useful. This is why it can be made to make sense to everyone who is familiar with the context within which it was uttered(84).

116. If we look at Ian's reply to the stranger's question ('What would I have to do to be able to come and live here?' p.28: 17-18), we may see that it reflects a different kind of understanding to that which was indicated by Shirley's answer and which Mark seemed to share, 'Learn to live like we do'(p.28: 24). Ian tells the teacher in role as the stranger that he would have to 'climb the great mountain'(p.28: 21-22) in order to be able to come and live here. At once, we feel that he has a different idea of what it means to 'be one of our people'(p.28: 23). For Ian, the stranger must take a test and demonstrate his worthiness. He must earn the right to come and live in the village. Of course, if he fails in this 'he won't be one of our

people', but if he succeeds he will no longer be considered or treated as a stranger. It is as if the stranger's suitability may be tried and tested outside (and before) the situation within which he has to be accepted. To Ian's mind, this person (the teacher in role as the stranger) may be labelled either 'stranger' or 'not stranger' according to how he does on the climb, and that label will then hold good through all occasions. This contrasts sharply with Shirley's understanding ('Believe in our god and do our ways') and with Mark's appreciation of what will be required of the stranger ('Learn to live like we do'). They both indicate that the stranger will be expected to continually demonstrate his group membership through the manner of his living. Ian will set him going according to how he performs on the test, whilst Shirley and Mark will judge him by his ability to contribute properly as 'one of us'. Within these two levels of understanding we may be persuaded to see the nature of meaning as it is 'normally' perceived and as it is produced. We may see it as a kind of label 'this is a stranger' or as a managed accomplishment and a presentation of 'strangeness'. We may see it as 'given' ('you succeeded in your climb, so you are no longer a stranger') or as work done by those involved to give people character, personality and identity. We may see it as modelling or as managing. We may be reminded of the building with the Marks and Spencer sign over the



doorway and the activities of those people inside to make the sign meaningful. In this sense, Ian is a kind of sign-writer, a labeller, but it is the activities of Shirley and Mark which keep his signs meaningful. He seems to think he can set them up and then walk away and leave them to take care of themselves. Shirley and Mark show that they need to be continuously made meaningful by the actions of those within the compass of the signs(85).

117. We may feel, in the light of these contributions, that there are two aspects of a situation, the 'world' and that which we make of the 'world'. Both are parts of the managed accomplishment, but the one (the 'world') seems to be accepted by all as 'fact' and the other as an area within which we may agree or disagree. Ian (in this piece of drama) seems to concentrate upon the first of these, for it is Ian who draws our attention to various aspects of the 'world' of by-volcano living. It was Ian who brought in the climbers, the treasures and the great god. He knew there were treasures because he could see them glittering, and it was Ian who put them in the great volcano. The teacher in role as the stranger seemed to be working upon these pieces of 'factual information' to draw out implications for living, point relationships and explore the different kinds of knowledge involved. In other words, the teacher in role as the stranger and most of the other children were working to give significance to Ian's

contributions. They were making them meaningful and not simply letting them stand as meaningful.

118. Here is a good example of the way in which the climbers and the treasures introduced by Ian are given significance by the others and made to work on another level;

(p.25)

06 Teacher. How do you know they're up there?  
 07 Ian. You can see 'em glittering.  
 08 Teacher. Mmm.  
 09 Ian. Clear day.  
 10 [pause]  
 11 Teacher. Can/  
 12 Bev. And at night.  
 13 Teacher. Sorry?  
 14 Bev. And at night.  
 15 Teacher. Can you? They shine and gleam at  
 16 night?  
 17 Bev. (Yeah.  
 18 Shirley. (Yeah.  
 19 Teacher. What in the moonlight sort of thing?  
 20 All. Mmm...Yeah/  
 21 Some. Yes.  
 22 Teacher. Goodness, it must be a wonderful  
 23 sight.  
 24 Julia. Yeah.  
 25 Mark. Mmm..yes.  
 26 Teacher. Do you think anyone might be tempted  
 27 to come...out?  
 28 Julia. Yes.  
 29 Teacher. With their \*\*\*\*\*?

(p.26)

01 Mark. Yes/  
 02 Ian. Yeah.  
 03 Teacher. I mean they must be worth quite a lot  
 04 of money.  
 05 Mark. Yes.  
 06 Teacher. Aren't they?  
 07 All. Yes.  
 08 Mark. There have been quite a few climbers  
 09 already.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 25-26)

At first glance, this conversation may seem to be idling. It is as though everyone is waiting for something to happen, as if they are content just to keep things going as they play with the idea of the jewels;

elaborating a bit, but making no attempt to introduce any new ideas. They seem to be waiting to see what course events will take and keeping the situation before them as they wait. It is a time in which they can enjoy 'living through' the context they have created and take some pleasure in their achievement. However, when we look at this piece more carefully we may see that they are working to build up the value of the treasure so that it may be seen as something precious in itself, as containing jewels which 'shine and gleam at night.....in the moonlight'(p.25: 15-19). They all contribute to this by giving the teacher in role as the stranger plenty of support and encouragement,

15 Teacher.                    They shine and gleam at  
16                    night?  
17 Bev.                    (Yeah.  
18 Shirley.                (Yeah.  
19 Teacher.                What in the moonlight sort of thing?  
20 All.                    Mmm...Yeah/  
21 Some.                    Yes.  
22 Teacher.                Goodness, it must be a wonderful  
23                    sight.  
24 Julia.                    Yeah.  
25 Mark.                    Mmm..yes. (p.25). By the time that the

stranger is ready and able to introduce the idea of the climbers as thieves and intruders who threaten their island, they are all in a position to know what he is talking about. Indeed, the whole of this extract seems to proceed by a series of unfinished statements with the teacher in role making suggestions to which the children invariably respond positively. There is nothing here but innuendo. This is made clear if we consider the stranger's talk for a moment and leave aside the

children's contributions,  
 'Do you think anyone might be tempted  
 to come...out?' (p.25: 26-27)  
 'With their \*\*\*\*\*?' (p.25: 29)  
 'I mean they must be worth quite a  
 lot of money.' (p.26: 03-04)  
 'Aren't they?' (p.26: 06)

He never makes his meaning clear (though we cannot  
 uncover what he said in line 29), yet the children know  
 exactly what he is talking about, and when Mark sums it  
 all up,

'There have been quite a few climbers  
 already.' (p.26: 08-09), everyone appreciates that  
 this is no chance remark about the popularity of the  
 island as a place for mountaineering. They have created  
 a level of understanding which does not need to be put  
 into words in order to be shared. This piece contains  
 the threat to the group symbolised in the 'climbers' and  
 the 'treasures' they seek, and everyone knows they are  
 talking about thievery and intrusion. Clearly, the two  
 aspects are complimentary and entwined. The climbers  
 are nothing without the threat they bear, and it would  
 be impossible to articulate that threat without a  
 picture of the climbers and the treasure they covet.  
 They have reached a point of understanding in which the  
 meaning of the context may be taken without anyone  
 deliberately attempting to say what they mean. They  
 depend entirely upon each other, and though Ian seems to  
 supply the 'pictures' it is the others who share with  
 him the responsibility for making them meaningful(86).

119. Although this piece of drama contains different  
 levels of understanding it should not be seen as the sum

of many different points of view, many different interpretations. Ian, as we have seen, does not just express a point of view but contributes by connecting with that which has gone before. His words have implications for the situation within which they are uttered. Shirley's understanding (and, therefore, her contributions) are part of a situation which Ian has helped to make. Every contribution has to earn the right to be taken seriously and, as it is understood and made meaningful, so it will become a part of the situation and cannot then be ignored. The dramatic and everyday experience is no more but those things which are said and done and which are found to be meaningful as they are located within a context indicated by those same words and actions. It should come as no surprise that contributions serve to illuminate situations of their use, for these 'situations' are no more but the words and actions by which they are made visible.

120. At the end of this section of the drama Ian says,

'We..we're true people 'cause our  
 .....fathers and mothers were and  
 if we go up now we'll probably be  
 safe.' (p.29: 09-13). He still seems to be

searching for a basic identity of the kind with which we enter the world and which should carry us through with little further attention. This is in accordance with the 'natural attitude' by which we approach ourselves, and the world within which we seem to find ourselves. However, as we look at this contribution in terms of the

work done to present dramatic and everyday situations, we may see that the kind of understanding displayed through his words is drawn out of the situation they serve to describe. There is a shift in his level of understanding from 'identity' being a matter of passing appropriate tests, to being born into a particular culture. 'We are true people because our mothers and fathers were', represents another level of understanding and both are drawn out of the drama which gave character to Shirley's 'Believe in our god and do our ways'. They are involved in different experiences and yet they manage to present a 'shared in common' world which seems to account for their varied interpretations. The emphasis seems to be upon providing a context which enables all of them to keep going.

121. This sense of being involved in a 'shared in common experience' is demonstrated nicely in a short example taken from the next part of the drama. The teacher in role as the stranger has just left the priests and we see him discussing his experience with the other children. The priests, meanwhile, are talking about the stranger:

10	Teacher.	(Thanks.	Mark.	I'm not very
11				sure how
12				he's going
13				to make it.
14			Ian.	He's a bit
15				clumsy.
16			Peter.	Yes.
17	Teacher.	Do you think I	Ian.	Yeah, he left
18		did all right?		his shoes.
19		They liked me,		
20		didn't they?	They said I could go.	

21 Julia. Yes.

(Extract from the transcript, page 40)

122. Here are two groups who feel that they have shared an experience which they both understand and which they have created entirely out of their words and actions in collaboration with one another, and who yet have different perceptions of what happened. The teacher in role as the stranger feels that he has done quite well ('They liked me didn't they?' p.40: 19-20) and the children's reassurance throughout the meeting did much to make him feel this way. The priests, however, saw things differently, and as Mark says a little later 'Don't know if the great god will recommend him'(p.40: 28-29, p.41: 01-02). These people may well understand the situation they have helped to create (as, we may say, 'stranger seeking permission of priests to climb the mountain') whilst not understanding it in the same way. It is on those occasions in which we are concerned to discover something of another's identity (even as they are concerned to present themselves) that we can become keenly aware of the different levels of understanding. It is not just how we present ourselves but also what others make of that presentation. The teacher was surprised, much later when the recordings were transcribed, to find the kind of impression he had made upon the priests, for he really did think he had done quite well.

SUSTAINING SITUATIONS IN DRAMA.

123. One of the most significant aspects of the business of making life meaningful is the 'generative force' which seems to be at the heart of all sense making activities. The basic assumption that the social life is meaningful, coupled with our abiding concern to make it appear so, ensures that we keep going and that we keep this 'world' ever before our eyes. We can, and do, account for everything which happens. There is no time off.

124. We have seen, during the course of this study, how every contribution 'connects' with the developing situation, or else is made to do so(87). We have seen how on those occasions when the 'facticity' of the social world is threatened, the people involved conspire that the threat may be accounted for and the stability of the world maintained and strengthened. We have seen these things happen in dramatic contexts as people cope with 'errors' or go out of their way to demonstrate their agreement(88). We have seen how people 'look ahead' and prepare the drama and a place for themselves within it(89). We have seen how character and personality are presented through words and actions(90). All this and much more have we seen, and all of these activities are a part of the 'generative force' which seems to compel us to fare forward. Within the business of meaning making there is a kind of 'motivational charge' which insists that we keep going and which gives



the situation a sense of stability over time. In providing a structure and a sense of stability and meaningfulness we give a 'promise' of continuation and the feeling that life will abide; it is part of the managed accomplishment. Without this belief in a structured, meaningful world we would experience only purposeless outpourings. This is highly significant, and it has important implications for teaching and learning in drama(91).

125. We have to appreciate, for instance, that our concern to keep dramatic situations going (by contributing properly, coping with errors and threats, etc.) is not a part of the teaching situation within which the drama seems to take place. It is not done in order to please the teacher or because the teacher has said that it has to be done. Teachers cannot get pupils to present experience dramatically because the presentation of a form of life is not something we do over and above the business of presenting teachers and pupils. The presentation of 'strangers and guides' is 'another country, [and] they do things differently there'. A teacher may tell a child how to act like a priest, but he can only help him to be priestly. Priests, like strangers, like teachers and pupils, are made in situations and not by handing out badges. Furthermore, they are likely to be made in situations where there are no teachers to tell pupils what to do. This concern to keep dramatic experience going, does not

even come from the pleasure those involved may get from what they are doing, though it may be very pleasurable. Rather, this 'generative force' is an aspect of the presentation of a form of life whether it is to be treated as real or make-believe.

126. There is a motivation to sustain the drama which is seen in the activities by which we make our experience of the social world meaningful and by which we give it a sense of stability. It is through these sense making activities that our social world and our identity within that world is preserved. We do not let these things go lightly and we cannot if we are to find the social world a meaningful place. We are committed to sustaining a situation in which we are personally involved and through which we have a sense of personality. We make the world seem real and meaningful as we present it as 'existing through time'. It is real as we manage to keep it intact. We succeed in that we are able to project this world into the future, in that we can speak with some confidence about tomorrow.

127. When the other children rallied to Ian's aid (92), the teacher's interests, and the pleasure they get as pupils from doing drama, are far from their thoughts. They are kept busy by the need to make Ian's 'inappropriate' contribution sensible. They are concerned to cope with a threat to the situation within which they are presented, and their concern to keep going is part of the dramatic context. This does not

mean that we are 'locked into' situations and prevented by the 'generative force' from getting out, but it does mean that we cannot rest from the business of making life seem meaningful. We have to present ourselves and the context within which we have a sense of identity, but these contexts and the roles which we present are forever changing. Put simply, we can stop teaching and go home, but we cannot just stop (even when, as we have seen, we are waiting for something to happen).

128. We have to move from one context to another in a proper way, which means in a way which will serve to uphold our sense of identity and the feeling that there is yet an 'inner me' wandering through this life and engaging in different activities. The alternative is a collection of discrete events without sense or structure and offering no feeling of development and progression. Such an existence would appear to be meaningless. So, for instance, we have to bring school to an end; lessons have to be concluded, prayers said and bells rung. We cannot simply walk out; or rather, we can just walk out but that will be taken as a significant action and one which requires an explanation. It will even be 'explained' if we have to say, 'I just walked out. I don't know why. I can't think what came over me', for we are all subject to occasional bouts of irrational behaviour (for so long, that is, as we can show them to be irrational). Part of the work involved in making situations appear meaningful is concerned with bringing

them successfully to a close. They do not just end, and they are not normally interrupted (and when they are, they must be shown to have been interrupted). Rather, they are brought to a close from within.

129 Of course, in many cases these endings are themselves 'institutionalised' and marked by particular activities (ringing up the cash register at the end of a sale, putting on coats when the 'end of school' bell rings but not when the 'playtime' one goes), and then we know what to do and how to act in order to get out properly. At other times, the conventions within the language of particular situations may serve to bring about endings ('Come back and see me again if it doesn't clear up') and people using the telephone know when to put down the receiver properly. They do not need to be told that the conversation is over. Furthermore, we all know what it feels like to have the telephone receiver 'put down' in the middle of a conversation. Generally, though, these 'endings' are built into a conversation by those involved as they work towards a sense of conclusion. Discussions, for instance, are rounded off and not simply left in the air. This may be done by using a kind of summary, as in this example from the transcript, where the teacher 'ends' one discussion before starting another.

(p.8)

27 Teacher. So there's the volcano..starting to  
 28 erupt...you can feel the....vibrations.  
 29 Peter. Mmm.

(p.9)

01 Teacher. And you can hear the sounds/

02 Several. Mmm/  
03 Teacher. and it's  
04 getting hot...you say.  
05 Ian. (Used to send off/  
06 Some. (Mmm. Yes.  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 8-9)

This kind of work, in the form of little summaries, is done quite regularly in order to bring sections of the discussion to a close and demonstrate to the others that the end is coming(93). Discussions are not just stopped, and when they are, there is some explaining to be done,

'Can I just interrupt there a minute?' (p.19: 18). Similarly, arguments do not usually end in blows and generally, we know when to laugh at a joke. These endings are usually managed from within and we do not have to be told when to leave the doctor's surgery.

130. We may conclude from this that bringing dramatic situations to a close could prove quite demanding. The 'generative force' of meaning making works to keep the situation going and if we are to end it properly we will need to draw upon this and manage the closing. This is not always easy to do.

131. Of course, it is always open to us to interrupt the drama, and whilst the teacher is most likely to do this, the children can as well ('Please Mr. Millward, can I get a drink of water?'). When someone interrupts in this way it is important to realise that the dramatic situation has already been challenged, for this contribution is part of the everyday experience of teachers and pupils and people wanting to leave the

hall. It is not likely to make sense within the dramatic context. If it cannot be accommodated, if it cannot be 'accounted for' within the drama, it will serve to drag everyone unceremoniously back into the school hall where it can be made to make sense(94). Speaking in this way is rather like putting the 'phone down in the middle of a conversation. The change can be abrupt; it can be upsetting, unsettling. Actions of this kind may indicate that the situation has become uncomfortable and too much to bear; the child wants to get out of this context and back into the safety of everyday life. It may, of course, mean that he is bored with the dramatic experience and wants to do something else. For whatever reasons, it can be unnerving for those left to have one of their number absent himself from the work being done to present the social life. Sometimes such a departure can leave a sense of awkwardness behind, and this has to be covered and coped with in order to restore our faith in the facticity of the social world. No one likes an awkward silence. Of course, such interruptions and departures may not have the same unsettling effect in drama, for we know that dramatic situations may be curtailed in such a summary manner. Indeed, they have to be shown to be only 'managed accomplishments', and this nipping between contexts is part of the way in which we indicate that we are involved with the make-believe. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how (and in spite of the make-believe

quality of our dramatic presentations) great care is taken to end these situations properly. We do not normally just put down the receiver and take up again elsewhere(95).

132. Sometimes, though, dramatic situations are threatened by incidents in the everyday world, the world where 'life goes on'. So, bells ring, hall times change and we may have to go home. The ever present, instantly recoverable world of everyday experience surrounds our dramatic presentations, and we have to work to keep it at bay. It can very easily intrude. A nice example of this 'intrusion' occurs as the guides drag the stranger off up the mountain and the guardians struggle to prevent them breaking through. Suddenly in the middle of all the jostling and pulling, Beverley calls out,

'The wire...the wire, Mr. Millward.'(p.64: 19). For a moment, these two (Beverley and the teacher) are snapped out of the drama. A cable could be ignored, but when they tangled with it, they had to treat it as a threat. Accidents have this kind of effect, they put us off our balance. When we trip up, the 'world' goes with us for we lose control. It took them only a moment to gather their wits and continue with the struggle, but in that moment we were afforded a glimpse into the abyss. Accidents are awkward and upsetting, they force us to confront the nature of experience and they point to the managed quality of the social life.

133. Generally, though, the dramatic contexts

presented here are ended properly and from within, and not by the intrusion of other areas of experience. This extract from the transcript comes immediately after Shirley and Ian have managed to cope with their different kinds of understanding of the great god, whilst yet presenting a 'shared in common' experience (96).

(p.27)

20 Shirley. And he watches over them.  
21 Teacher. Well, goodness me.....  
22 You know I can understand why you stay  
23 here...  
24 I can understand that now. I couldn't  
25 before but I can understand it now...  
26 hot water...and then you've got a god  
27 looking after you up there/  
28 Julia. And you...and the  
29 warmth in our houses/

(p.28)

01 Teacher. The warmth of your houses  
02 too/  
03 Ian. You can fry your fish/  
04 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\* a fire/  
05 Ian. can fish  
06 in the water..it just cooks them for  
07 you.  
08 Teacher. Marvellous, isn't it?  
09 Ian. Mmm.  
10 Teacher. Do you think I could come and live here  
11 too?  
12 [chuckles]  
13 Julia. Yes.  
14 Teacher. Do you have strangers or not?  
15 Ian. Mmm...well..  
16 Shirley. Yeah, we have/  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 27-28)

134. When Shirley says, 'And he watches over them' (p.27: 20), the teacher considers that they have come far enough in terms of the 'academic task structure' (a happy end to an impressive display of religious understanding) and also in terms of the 'social participation structure' which seems well established



and well able to provide a context for their learning. He feels ready to bring this piece of the drama to an end. However, he does not say, 'Right, that's very good. We'll stop there', but tries to bring about the transformation, from teacher in role as a stranger to teacher, by the use of a summary (p.27: 24-27). He goes on to tidy it up by linking it back to the beginning ('I can understand that now. I couldn't before but I can understand it now' p.27: 24-25). At the end he evaluates their work ('Marvellous, isn't it?')(97), and that puts him safely back in the world of teachers and pupils. Or, at least, he thinks it does.

135. But the children do not respond in the way he expects them to respond. Either they appreciate what is happening but are concerned to keep the drama going and so make use of their positions within it to keep the themselves and the stranger involved, or else they have been so successful in building the situation, and the 'stranger' within the situation, that they are able to use the teacher's summary and evaluation to elaborate the role of the stranger. In either case they do not 'see' him as a teacher. His 'teacherness' is not attended to, and this in spite of what the teacher intends. The others will not let him 'escape' from his role as a stranger, for they persist in responding to him as a stranger. He is left mouthing their words whilst they work to develop the dramatic experience and keep it before our eyes. The teacher is finding that it

is not always easy to get out from within.

136. At this moment, the teacher really is straddled between two levels of experience, and it shows in his contributions,

'Do you think I could come and live here too?' (p.28: 10). It is a question that takes a hypothetical form whilst working in an experiential mode. It can work in the dramatic context, of course, but it is as if the teacher had suddenly slipped out of role and, instead of asking them how they lived, tried to get them to think about their lives. It is rather as if he were a teacher peering into their drama. The children chuckle awkwardly because they feel something is wrong. They feel the incongruity of the situation(98).

137. The teacher interpreted their chuckles as a response to his suggestion that he (as he was a teacher) could come and live with them in their imaginary world. It was a remark delivered out of context. The teacher assumed this to be the correct interpretation of their chuckle for, at the time, he was attempting to 'disengage' himself and the children from the dramatic context. He considered he was presenting himself as a 'teacher' in a way that was sufficiently plain to enable them to take him on that level. Indeed, he only got involved in this awkwardness (teacher talking with stranger's words) because he was hovering between the everyday and dramatic experience and not demonstrating properly how he should be seen. This was how he

accounted for their laughter.

138. However, the children were not happy with this interpretation and did not think they were laughing at the teacher's silliness. They 'saw' the situation rather differently. They considered they had been chuckling at the idea of the stranger asking them, the children, if he could come and live with them. It seemed strange to them that an adult should ask 'permission' of a child. It was as if the stranger had made an error in management (which, however you look at it, he had) and they coped with it by treating it as a bit of a joke. By this means they managed to keep the dramatic situation going.

139. The chuckle is enough to indicate that the teacher is failing to make his position plain, but his next contribution will leave us in no doubt that he is firmly back in the dramatic situation,

'Do you have strangers or not?'(p.28: 14). He tried to get out, but he did not handle it properly for he tried to do it by himself. The successful ending from within is a collaborative affair and must be negotiated properly. The children did not appreciate (or else refused to accept) that he was bringing things to a close and so they just kept going. He had to keep going, as well, or else 'put down the receiver'.

140. We can contrast this unilateral attempt to stop the drama when the teacher felt that it was right, with the way in which it finally does end.

(p.29)

09 Ian. We..we're true people 'cause/  
 10 Mark. Yes/  
 11 Ian. our.....  
 12 fathers and mothers were and if we go  
 13 up now we'll probably be safe.  
 14 Teacher. I see....but me being a stranger/  
 15 Ian. Mmm/  
 16 Teacher. would  
 17 I have to do this?  
 18 All. Mmm..yes.  
 19 Julia. You'll probably have/  
 20 Teacher. Well, I'll have to give  
 21 some thought to that because/  
 22 Bev. If you don't,  
 23 you've got to go.....to go away to  
 24 another country.  
 25 Teacher. Well, I realise that so I'll have  
 26 (to give/  
 27 All. (Mmm/  
 28 Yes/  
 29 Teacher. it a bit of thought.

(p.30)

01 Julia. Mmm..yes.  
 02 Teacher. Before I decide whether to go or not.  
 03 Some. Yes.  
 04 Shirley. And then you'll have to build your own  
 05 house.  
 06 Teacher. All right.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 29-30)

141. At this point, the stranger is bound by the consequences of all that he has started. On the one hand, there is the possibility of a successful initiation and the chance to belong and 'build your own house'(p. 30: 04). Then, on the other, there is the possibility of failure, of remaining a stranger and having 'to go.....to go away to another country.' (p.29: 23-24). The children know exactly where they are, they are full of confidence, and in the end (and ironically), it is the teacher in role as the stranger who has to confront the situation described by the children. As he comes to appreciate this and accept the

choice before him ('Well, I realise that so I'll have to give...it a bit of thought....before I decide whether to go or not.' p.29: 25-29 and p.30: 02), there is a sense of having arrived at a destination(99). There is a kind of patterned unity about it all, and a feeling of rightness which everyone seems to share. At such a time it is not difficult to stop; indeed it seems right to stop. And so they do, 'All right.'(p.30: 06). It is not possible to say, nor does it matter much, whether these words belong to the stranger or the teacher(100).

142. The teacher was not the only person to attempt to bring the drama to a close without the co-operation of the others. Later, the teacher in role is presented to the priests, so that he might prove himself worthy and be allowed to climb. Everything seemed to be going quite well and then the priests tell the stranger that he will have to learn the great laws (p.36: 08). They go away to get them and, after some delay, he is given them to read,

		(p.36)
29	Oh. Oh thank you, thank you, thank	
		(p.37)
01	you, Great..Great Priest Diamonds.	
02 Teacher.	Thank you. Do I sit down?	
03 Shirley.	Sit down.	
04 Ian.	You may climb the mountain if you wish.	
	(Extract from the transcript, pages 36-37)	

143. Ian surprises everyone by telling the stranger that he may climb the mountain. They were surprised because the stranger had clearly not earned the right to climb and was still in the middle of trying to prove himself worthy. Ian, though, may well have been feeling

uncomfortable with his role and the demands it seemed to put upon him, for he seems to be taking advantage of his position within the dramatic context to terminate the meeting. Perhaps he wanted to return to his own little priestly drama in the other corner of the hall, or perhaps the business of turning away for a discussion was no longer providing sufficient relief; perhaps he just wanted to get on with the plot. As he is working within the dramatic situation it is not possible to decide whether he was trying to stop the drama or just move from this episode to another. All that we can say is that his contribution ('You may climb the mountain if you wish.' p.37: 04) works within the dramatic context as it works within the everyday situation of a pupil doing drama and looking for a way out.

144. The teacher was surprised and a bit upset by Ian's initiative (they hadn't developed this piece enough and it seemed to be going so well) but there was nothing he could do directly as a teacher that would not also serve to threaten the drama. He could not say, for instance, 'Just a second, Ian, you've reached that bit too early. Can we go back to where.....', without destroying the dramatic context. So he chooses to work through that context and he responds (as the children did earlier when the teacher tried to stop the drama) by developing the situation so that it might account for Ian's words. He shifts the level of concern,

'Will I be able to climb it all right,

do you think?' (p.37: 08-09). They concentrate now upon the difficulties the stranger may encounter as he climbs, rather than upon his worthiness as one who may be allowed to try. Ian did not manage to bring it to a close by himself, but he did get the teacher in role as the stranger to shift the emphasis. He seems quite happy with this.

145. On the evidence of this piece of drama, dramatic situations seem to be brought to a close when they are working very effectively(101). This may seem like a paradox, but it can probably be explained. After all, 'endings' are not likely to come at the beginning as those involved try to find out where they are and the 'generative force' has yet to take over(102). They can only come when the dramatic context is safely established. Further, there is a feeling of rightness as the situation draws towards a close, a feeling that all is well and that we know where we are going. It is as if we had prepared the ground for the next step. It is because 'endings' are managed and because we can recognise them as 'endings' and not merely as 'interruptions' that they will appear to be well managed. After all, the ending will come at the end if it is well done, and if (as we have seen) it is not well done it will not be taken as an ending and will not be marked (unless of course there is someone by to make a transcript and draw conclusions about what is going on). Certainly, it is possible to notice a kind of harmony at

the end of the first part of the drama(103), and surely it is present as well at the close of this piece, as the stranger and the children with the priests' blessing prepare for the climb.

(p.44)

05 Teacher. But I think they're  
 06 quite nice really.  
 07 Julia. They're not used to strangers coming.  
 08 Shirley. I've known/  
 09 Teacher. Aren't they?  
 10 Shirley. And I've known many that've gone up to  
 11 the mountain have been swallowed..up.  
 12 Teacher. Have they?  
 13 Shirley. \*\*\*\*\*.  
 14 Teacher. You're comforting aren't you?  
 15 [laughter]  
 16 I've got to go up in the morning.  
 17 [more laughter]  
 18 Julia. You don't feel the same.  
 19 Teacher. Are you nervous coming with me?  
 20 Shirley. Mmm.  
 21 Teacher. Are you?  
 22 Shirley. I've never been up there.  
 23 Teacher. Oh golly. Ian. His mind's  
 24 took to it.  
 25 Mark. A lot of/  
 26 Ian. His mind's  
 27 put to it.  
 28 Mark. A lot of/  
 29 Ian. And we can't  
 (p.45)  
 01 go with him.  
 02 Mark. A lot of  
 03 people don't  
 04 like it,  
 05 especially  
 06 some..\*\*\*\*\*  
 07 other places  
 08 \*\*\*\*\* other  
 09 countries.

(Extract from the transcript, pages 44-45)

146. When it is possible to joke in dramatic situations, when irony can be successfully used (p.44: 14-17), we may well feel that the context is firmly established and that those involved feel comfortable and 'at home'. They feel they have done what they set out



to do (present a form of life) and they can now work naturally to accomplish a close.

147. Of course, this example (like the one mentioned above) does end successfully in that the dramatic situation is drawn to a close from within. By good fortune, though, we have here an 'ending' which has not been managed. Whilst the stranger and the children were bringing the dramatic situation in their part of the room to an easy and comfortable end, the priests were still working away elsewhere. The teacher did not appreciate this, and simply switched off the recording equipment when his group had finished (mindful only of that to which his attention had been drawn by the sense making activities of those with whom he was immediately involved). It was only later, when the recordings had been examined and transcribed, that we could see how the dramatic situation presented by the priests had been so abruptly and thoughtlessly terminated. There should be a lesson here for all who consider themselves sensitive to the demands of a dramatic context for there is likely to be more going on than we know.

148. In this case, though, the teacher's careless and inconsiderate action does enable us to have these two examples side by side. We can see at once, how the piece with the stranger seems to be resolved whilst the other is left hanging in the air. Much of this is managed through their use of tone and emphasis, but Ian's strange chant does seem to be drawing towards a

formal farewell, whilst Mark is clearly in the middle of a very different kind of account which he is not allowed to explore. It feels as if I have spoiled something by stopping the tape here for we know that there is more to come. It simply is not finished(104).

149. Bringing situations to a close in drama does not always mean bringing drama to a close. Sometimes, as we have seen(105), one situation is ended in order to present another. This happens, for instance, at the end of the 'waiting time' and we can see how it is managed;

(p.51)

26                    Oh, this takes so long. I wish I could  
 27                    get going now.  
 28 Julia.            Gosh, they should be calling for you any  
 29                    minute now.

(p.52)

01 Shirley.        Any minute (yes.  
 02 Teacher.                (\*\*\*\*\* they?  
 03 Shirley.        They're not, they'll be/  
 04                    [the bells rings]  
 05 Teacher.        What's that? There's (the bell.  
 06 Shirley.                (Yeah, come now/  
                               (Extract from the transcript, pages 51-52)

150. The waiting will end when that for which they have been waiting occurs, or else the waiters just stop waiting and give up. In either case, though, the endings have to be managed. As the stranger and the children describe and present the final moments of the waiting, they also 'instruct' the priests (for whom they wait) to bring their waiting to an end. 'I wish I could get going now'(p.51: 26-27) is more than just an account of the stranger's feelings, for it also works on another level (and as a kind of 'stage direction') to let them know what the teacher wants to happen. Julia

takes it on this level, as an instruction (as well as taking it within the dramatic context), and promptly puts things into action by 'telling' the priests what they must do,

'Gosh, they should be calling for you any minute now.' (p.51: 28-29). She gets Shirley's support,

'Any minute, yes.' (p.52: 01), and then the priests ring the bell. Now the teacher can say,

'What's that? There's the bell.' (p.52: 05), and the waiting is over. This is moving us towards the next chapter, 'Teaching and Learning in Drama', so we shall go no further now. Only, let it be clear that the end of this 'waiting' did not just happen, but required the co-operation of everyone involved to make it work properly.

151. In case there should be any doubt about this let us just consider again the 'ending' produced as the stranger and the guides climb into the priests' boat that will take them across the river to the mountain. Once again we may see the situation resolved as the teacher in role as the stranger steps into the boat; all that remains for them now is to go properly. All of them strive to ensure that this happens.

'Everyone works to build this scene: those on the shore waving goodbye and offering little bits of last minute advice ('..have a nice time.' '..don't touch the river.' 'Take care'), Ian and Peter with their strange cries ('Yorbbaaaa' and 'Schzorbbaaaa') which are meaningless to me and which yet seem to fit so well, even the sound of the swishing oars'(106).

No one is surprised when the end 'comes'; they have all prepared for it, as they have all helped to prepare it. This is the way situations may be brought to a close from within, and the way 'endings' are generated through those situations which they serve to conclude.

152. By taking a more general view of the nature of meaning in everyday life and then comparing it with the work done to produce dramatic situations, we should be able to appreciate something of the relationship which exists between the two levels of experience. We might come to feel that 'living through drama' is the same kind of experience as our experience of everyday life, for it is produced by the same methods and practices. It is different in that it is treated differently; its 'managed' quality is acknowledged in its presentation. This, together with the 'generative force' which seems to be a part of all meaning making activities, and which works to ensure the presentation of a stable, and 'shared in common' experience of life, has important implications for teaching and learning in drama. It is towards these that we shall address our attention now.

153. The following chapter should also provide a justification for the study and, more significantly, a justification for engaging in the dramatic presentation of experience. I hope it will help us to see why it is a worthwhile activity. There is a sense in which it is a concluding chapter (though there are no conclusions

and another chapter still to come) for it shows how this kind of presentation of experience directly affects our learning and the kinds of teaching we can do.

Chapter Eight.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN DRAMA.

'What are you teaching these children now, and  
what are they actually learning?'

Gavin Bolton(1)

TEACHING IN DRAMA.

The Problem of Teaching in Drama.

1. When people in schools present life dramatically, the more regular teaching experience of 'teachers and pupils doing drama' is left unattended. At the time of their involvement, the everyday experience is not marked by the participants in the dramatic presentation, though it is open to others, of course, to interpret the activity in this way(2). The 'teacher' upon such occasions has to forsake overall control of the developing situation and take to himself only those 'rights' afforded by the dramatic context and his role within it. So, in the example used in this study, he can draw upon the extra 'rights' enjoyed by an adult stranger talking to a group of children. As the teacher is no longer able to dominate the 'social participation structure' of the classroom, he also seems to lose control of the learning which takes place. This, in turn, leaves him with no means of evaluating the students' performance. It begins to look as if the teacher who works from within the dramatic context has abandoned his responsibility for the children's learning and put aside his duty to teach. He seems to have become, instead, a kind of 'group leader', a 'facilitator' or an 'enabler'. He may be seen as a sort

of catalyst by which the others are kept going(3).

2. The teacher engaged in creating dramatic experience cannot talk of his intentions in the way that a teacher of history might do ('today I want to teach the children about the Battle of Agincourt'), or even as a teacher concerned to 'do drama', who might have quite precise ideas concerning the things he wishes to teach ('today we shall do some drama about being jealous, and I want the children to feel jealous.'). We have seen that presenting experience dramatically is a different kind of activity(4), and so because the teacher cannot set out his lesson plans in terms of those things he would like the children to learn, he seems to have no standard by which to tell how well they have done. He cannot even assess their achievement (as teachers 'doing drama' may like to do) by reference to a 'real world out there', or by seeing how well they measure up, by asking questions of the form, 'What would you say if you were in this predicament?'(5). The situation with which he is concerned has to be managed from moment to moment and contributions may be assessed only in terms of the developing context. It is not possible for him to 'look ahead' and see what they might do in order to judge how well they do it. The teacher can neither tell them what he wants them to learn nor decide how well they have learned it. He does not know where they will be at the end nor even those things for which they should be reaching. It is quite certain, for instance, that the

teacher of the transcript had no thought to concern himself with the nature of religious experience when he set the drama going, and Shirley's insistence that,

'We just believe in him.' (p.27: 04), is drawn out of the situation within which it makes sense(6). It could not have been predicted and it could not have been worked for(7).

3. It may seem as if all the teacher engaged in the dramatic presentation of experience can do is set the situation going, play along in the drama and then make some sort of comment at the end about the nature of the achievement. At best such an enterprise might be seen as a rather haphazard and inefficient means of dealing with significant aspects of experience (for how long would you have to wait for something worthwhile to occur?), and at worst, an opportunity for those involved to wallow without charts in a sea of self-indulgence (8). This looks like a teacher with nothing to teach, and with no standard by which to judge how well the children do. Surely in such a situation it would be a case of 'anything goes'?

4. Of course, it is not quite like this. The teacher who wants to work from within the dramatic context, has to make decisions beforehand about the kind of lesson he wishes to take. There are decisions to be made about whether to do drama or not, and presumably in making up his mind the teacher must draw upon decisions made even earlier about the kinds of rewards and experiences such



an activity offers. He must consider, too, the most suitable type of drama to use in a particular instance, and 'living through' drama is only one of many kinds(9). In other words before he even begins he has to have considered what he will do. More immediately, he has the responsibility to set things going and to make sure that the others know what is happening. So, he is likely to choose the theme and the point of interest for the drama in the way that a teacher might choose 'volcanoes' as a subject for a discussion. Even in those cases where the teacher gives responsibility to the children for decisions of this kind, 'We want to do murders, sir!'(10), he still has to make decisions about the way in which the theme is to be treated(11). These are the kinds of decisions which all teachers have to make before they start to teach, and when the teacher of the transcript introduced the drama by saying, 'Can you imagine that each of you.....'(p.21: 01), we may be sure that he had been this way. He would have ideas about the sort of drama he wanted, '..well be yourselves ....but be yourselves in this village'(12) even though, at this stage, he might not be clear about the themes he wanted them to explore(13).

5. The difficulties arise when the drama begins, for having prepared and introduced a lesson in the way of all teachers, the teacher now proceeds not to teach. He steps, instead, into role as a stranger and becomes an aspect of the dramatic context. His teaching role is

left unattended and is no longer marked.

6. It is not enough, as we have seen(14), to set up a teaching situation in the belief that it will simply keep going, for it has to be continuously managed all the time. The teacher cannot just step into role and trust that somewhere around him the 'real world' of teachers and pupils will carry on. He cannot trust the children to treat and see it as a learning situation, and if teaching is to take place he has to work as a teacher. The problem is, that as soon as he does so, as soon as the teacher appears in the drama, then the dramatic context of strangers and experts is immediately threatened. There is no place for the teacher there and we may ask, how is it possible for the teacher to teach yet not dominate the 'communication system' and destroy the drama?(15).

7. It is this dilemma which faces all drama teachers, and it is not surprising if many of us (ever mindful of our position as teachers) choose to spend our time working as 'teachers doing drama'(16). At least we know where we are then. And anyway, the apparent alternative whereby the teacher 'loses' himself in the drama and contributes only in terms of his role and the developing dramatic context, may look like a case of irresponsible self-gratification. After all, we are expected to do more as teachers than just enjoy ourselves.

8. It might seem as if this is happening in the drama recorded in the transcript. Certainly, the experience

of teachers and pupils is not significant in that it is not attended to during the presentation of the dramatic context(17). Each of those involved in creating the drama, and that, of course, includes the teacher, contributes in an appropriate way by taking account of the situation and working in accordance with the demands it puts upon its members. Generally, the participants are not seen to contribute in terms of some extra interest (either as teachers or pupils), but in terms of that which is going on in the dramatic context. There appears to be no room here for the teacher to teach and no place for him to go, for if he stumbles around in the drama he will destroy that which he is concerned to create, a level of experience beyond 'teachers and pupils'.

#### Being a Teacher in Drama.

9. However, the creation of a sense of meaningfulness is the business of making situations visible. It is a managed accomplishment, and as we have seen, there may be no great gulf between the everyday and make-believe presentation of experience beyond our concern to treat them differently(18). It seems quite possible for the teacher to attend to different levels of meaning (say, 'teachers and pupils' and 'strangers and experts') whilst appearing to contribute only within the dramatic context. His contributions may work upon various levels according to the way in which they are interpreted and

the context within which they are seen as sensible. It is not just that his words and actions may be interpreted in different ways (as being the words and actions of a 'teacher' or a 'stranger'), but that he may use them to achieve different ends. So, when Mark (a guardian) asks of the teacher (the stranger),

'Shall I bring him to meet you?', and the teacher responds as a stranger,

'Well....in a minute or two, yes.' (p.68: 13-14), we can see that both contributions may be understood on different levels. Mark can be seen as a guardian talking to the stranger and as a pupil asking advice of the teacher about the way in which the drama ought to proceed. The teacher, though, is using the dramatic context as he answers the guardian, to control the drama and prevent it from simply bouncing along on the level of plot. Their words, even the exchange, makes sense in terms of 'teachers and pupils' and in terms of 'strangers and guardians', and this though the two contexts could hardly be more different. It is quite remarkable, that in one line the teacher may demonstrate his 'teacheriness' and his 'strangeriness', and Mark his 'pupilness' and his 'expertness', and all at the same time(19). Of course, during most of this study we are likely to have responded to this kind of exchange in terms of the dramatic context because we have been looking at the nature of dramatic experience. In this chapter, though, as we shift our attention to teaching

and learning, we may be inclined to see the contributions as being aspects of the everyday experience of teachers and pupils. They are the same lines, though, however we choose to take them, the same words, and they are produced and made appropriate in the same way and by the same people.

10. As we look at examples of this kind we may come to feel that the dramatic situation is not, in some way, built upon our everyday life, but rather that both levels of experience exist as we succeed in presenting them through our words and actions. Furthermore, one contribution may be designed and arranged so as to illuminate both 'realities'. We may present, for example, 'teacher' and 'stranger' at the same time, and yet not be seen as 'one playing the other'.

11. Indeed, we can see this occurring as we watch the children pursuing their own interests (as children doing drama) through their roles in the drama. We may remember, that when the priests ran out of things to say and found it difficult to contribute properly, they interrupted the meeting with the stranger in order to have a discussion amongst themselves (p.34: 21). They did not stop the drama, but solved their difficulties as pupils within the drama(20). Shirley, too, as we may recall, adopted a similar tactic when the teacher, without warning, radically altered the dramatic context by deciding to 'back out' of his commitment(21). She gave herself, and the others, the opportunity to cope

with this surprise by asking for a meeting,

'Could you wait a minute? All..we want to have some discussion.' (p.54: 09-11). There are many

other examples; though it is not always easy to uncover motives within the experience of 'teachers and pupils' which find expression in the dramatic context. They are bound to be 'hidden' for they are presented through another context. Nevertheless, those occasions when the children try to secure parts for themselves as the drama develops, clearly show this to be happening(22), and we cannot help but feel that Julia is up to something as she brings the teacher's tape recorder into the drama(23). It is just because these motives are expressed through the drama that they are so hard to pin down.

12. This means that the teacher has to realise his teaching concerns in terms of the dramatic context, which is described by his words and actions as he works in role. So, when he speaks in the drama, his words serve not only to give character to the dramatic situation, but also indicate the kind of response expected from the others as they take part. Their response will be on two levels, for it will work as a response within the dramatic context and as a response to the teacher's 'instruction'. We have already looked at many examples of this occurring within the piece of drama at the centre of this study. Consider, for instance, the way in which the teacher in role as the stranger lead Shirley to an appropriate response through

the manner of his questioning(24), or think of how he 'challenged' the children to act properly(25). We have examined the way in which the teacher may manipulate the structure of the conversation in order to 'demonstrate' the kind of response he wants from the children, and we may remember how Shirley was made into an expert even though she did not have the knowledge to be an expert(26). In fact, all the way through the drama, the teacher is busily directing its course and, to some extent, its outcome. He cannot decide what another may say or do, but he can use their concern to contribute 'properly' to get the kind of response (and the drama) that he wants. This is the nature of the teacher's control in the dramatic context.

#### Teaching Through Theatre.

13. There is another way in which the teacher can work through the dramatic context in order to influence the course of the drama as a learning opportunity. He can make use of the conventions of the theatre. He can make use of its make-believe quality to pass on information. In this way he is able to work from within the drama without interrupting or threatening the imagined context. We can see this happening when the teacher in role as the stranger is taken to meet the priests. He is concerned to elaborate the context by building up the sense of occasion, and he achieves this by 'prompting' Julia in a 'stage whisper',

'I haven't bowed yet. I'm waiting for you to bow. Do I bow?' (p.33: 21-22). She 'takes his meaning' and tells him to bow,

'Yes, bow.' (p.33: 23). He plays the part of an anxious stranger who wishes to make a good impression and who realises things are not going to plan. By indicating what is happening (or rather, not happening) he gets Julia to do the 'right thing' without actually having to tell her to do so. He guides the drama through his presentation of the inexperienced stranger.

14. At times this business of providing 'stage directions' can get quite complicated. It is not unusual for the stranger and the children to whisper together in the presence of the priests, and each time that they do, the priests (who are right in front of them) appreciate that they are whispering and can even overhear the whispers and the things that they say. Yet they never acknowledge that this whispering has taken place. They simply do not admit the whispers as part of the dramatic context. No convention was established for this, and it is only by looking at the transcript that we can fully appreciate how smoothly it is made to work. The children working as priests appeared to realise that it was a necessary part of making the drama work properly and so they discounted it as part of the dramatic context. The children being guides, meanwhile, took the whispering in context (as whispers) and responded accordingly,

'If you start talking, they'll tell



you off.' (p.35: 07). This means that although the priests get to 'overhear' some strange things, they do not respond directly to what they hear. In the next example, for instance, they pick up some fairly significant information, and though they wait until the whispering is finished (an act which helps to 'produce' that whispering) they do not acknowledge that it has taken place;

10 Shirley. You shouldn't tell them that.

11 Teacher. Shouldn't I?

12 Shirley. No.

13 Teacher. Oh.

(Extract from the transcript, page 39)

Somehow, they know how to take these whispers, and so, rightly, they take no notice.

15. But they do attend to them, and this means that sometimes the teacher in role may use them as a device to give information to the priests about the way in which the drama should proceed. He cannot, of course, whisper to the priests directly in the way that he could whisper to the guides, for that would require a major readjustment of the dramatic context. So instead, he uses his 'asides' to the children to tell the priests what he wants them to do.

25 Teacher. Can we go or do we have to ask..or what?

26 Ian. You may go now.

(Extract from the transcript, page 39)

Now Ian's contribution is seen in the dramatic context not as a response but as an initiation, for line 25 is a whisper and it is not marked. However, in terms of the conventions of 'theatrical asides' it is a response to

the teacher's instruction in line 25. The priest overheard this whisper, as he overheard the others, but this time he realised that it was intended for him and so he acted upon it. He did so directly, but without acknowledging the whisper and without showing that he had heard what was said. The priest's perception of the dramatic context was altered because of the whispers, yet they could treat the whispers as 'theatrical conventions' which illuminated the context but were beyond the concern of the priests. This is a strange achievement, but it should help us to see that different 'realities' are aspects of the overall, managed experience, and that the teacher may work (as may the others) on many different levels in order to realise his interests in the drama. We should appreciate, of course, that by treating the whispers in this way they are also presenting the dramatic, make-believe quality of the experience.

16. There is another nice example of this use of 'theatrical convention' which occurs later in the drama when the teacher in role as the stranger brings to a close the 'waiting time'.

(p.51)

26 Teacher. Oh, this takes so long. I wish I could  
 27 get going now.  
 28 Julia. Gosh, they should be calling for you any  
 29 minute now.

(p.52)

01 Shirley. Any minute (yes.  
 02 Teacher. (\*\*\*\*\* they?  
 03 Shirley. They're not, they'll be/  
 04 [the bells rings]  
 05 Teacher. What's that? There's (the bell.

06 Shirley. (Yeah, come now/  
(Extract from the transcript, pages 51-52)

17. We looked at this piece earlier when we considered the ways in which dramatic situations could be brought to an end from within(27). Clearly, in terms of the dramatic context the stranger and the guides are waiting for the priests and must wait until the priests, who are standing apart, call them to the boat. However, the teacher is ready to bring this section of the drama to a close and so he must get the priests 'to ring the bell'. The teacher says,

'I wish I could get going now.' (p.51: 26), and he speaks as the stranger. Julia is quick to take his meaning, and 'passes on' his instruction through her role as a guide,

'Gosh, they should be calling for you any minute now.' (p.51: 28). Shirley gives it extra force (perhaps she is afraid that the priests have not heard!) by saying,

'Any minute, yes.' (p.52: 01). The children in role as priests see what is required of them and so they ring the bell.

Teacher. What's that? There's (the bell.  
Shirley. (Yeah, come now/  
(p.52: 05-06),

and the waiting is over. The priests' bell ended it, but the teacher brought it about.

19. These examples, and our study of the transcript, should encourage us to feel that far from simply setting it going and then letting the drama take its course, the

teacher keeps a very tight control upon its development. We might even want to conclude by now that his presence in the drama is oppressive and that he is much too meddlesome. It certainly came as a surprise, as the transcript was analysed, to discover just how busy the teacher could be whilst yet appearing, as a stranger amongst experts, to be at the beck and call of all about him.

#### The Influence of the Teacher in the Drama.

20. However, though we may want to criticise this teacher for being 'too busy', his influence is of a different order from that which he enjoys in more regular teaching situations. Because the experience of 'teachers and pupils' is not here presented (in that it is not attended to by those involved in creating the dramatic context), the extra 'rights' which the teacher has over the pupil are no longer directly available to him. The dramatic context which they are creating together, and which they can only create in collaboration with one another, puts severe constraints upon the way in which the teacher may talk and act.

Dorothy Heathcote makes this point very strongly;

'I can't explain it firmly enough that what looks like interference with their play is interference with how the structure can be shown to them. Their play must go the way they are emotionally ready for it to go. What I don't let them have a hand in is the deep structure of it...' (28).

21. We can see that the teacher has to work through his role as the stranger and within the dramatic

context. He has to work through the structure in order to guide the drama, for there is no room for the teacher to work directly. Indeed, his presence would be injurious to the drama, to that which he (as a teacher) is concerned to create. So, he may be able to delay the action for a while,

13 Mark. Shall I bring him to meet you?

14 Teacher. Well....in a minute or two, yes.

(Extract from the transcript, page 68),

for so long as he does so properly and within the dramatic context, but Julia can set it going again (I'll go and see if father can come along.' p.70: 29)(29).

If he is unhappy with that he must argue his case as the stranger within the drama, and in this instance that might not be easy, for Julia as the hostess (and a rather domineering one at that) will enjoy 'rights' over the stranger(30). We have to accept that the relationship between the teacher and the child he is teaching, is altered by the dramatic context, for both are bound by that context(31). This, as John Norman has argued, must mean

'that at the centre of all our endeavours is some kind of vision of a different world of schooling' (32).

It comes of the teacher's concern to present life dramatically, coupled with the absolute requirement that to do so he must contribute properly in terms of the dramatic context. It is this which puts real constraints upon the way he can speak and act, upon the way in which he can treat the children. After all, the

priests did not have to take his instructions buried in whispers. They could have simply told him to shut up and stop whispering, and he would have had to obey them or else risk destroying the drama. In this way his teaching must take place by 'stealth'.

22. Teaching of this kind is in marked contrast to that often found in formal classrooms. By stepping into role the teacher must sacrifice the extra 'rights' he usually has over the children, and give to them 'rights' they do not normally enjoy(33). Apart from having a profound effect upon the way in which the teacher treats the children, this working in role also points to a particular view of the nature of knowledge. It will influence, as well, the quality of learning that can take place.

#### LEARNING IN DRAMA.

##### The Influence of the Child.

23. Treating the children as contributors to a 'conversational exchange' of which the teacher, on one level at any rate, is just another participant, ensures that any extra 'rights' that a person may have are drawn out of the situation they are concerned to present, and are not an aspect of the teaching situation. However, these 'rights', which the teacher in role has given up, were based upon the teacher's access to knowledge, for being the 'one who knows' gave him the right to inform, ask questions and evaluate. The children were expected to learn from him and he to teach them the things that

he knew. But as he gives up his 'rights' in the teaching situation so he gives up his right to decide what counts as knowledge. He must, instead, collaborate with the children in the dramatic presentation of life which for all involved will be (on every occasion) both a new and familiar experience. This is knowledge drawn out of the moment, and it is not the same as those areas of knowledge we are normally concerned, as teachers, to 'pass on'. The children are now contributing directly to the formulation of knowledge instead of passively trying to receive that which the teacher has to offer. Their knowledge is part of their experience(34).

24. Now it might be that for the teacher to forgo these rights represents a sacrifice in terms of his own self-esteem; he may even fear the loss of his identity as a teacher. However, it is also an action which seems likely to influence in a beneficial way the nature of the learning involved. For that learning has now become an aspect of the situation within which it takes place and, as we have seen, the 'academic task structure' and the 'social participation structure' have become inextricably entwined(35). In this, as in its 'conversational form', the learning is of the same kind as that which the child is likely to have enjoyed before coming to school. It is that 'spontaneous learning' described by Wells(36) and characterised by attention to the immediate surroundings in the company of a concerned adult. It represents learning drawn out of the child's

interests and concerns(37). Indeed, it can only keep going for so long as these interests are met. It is not possible to make children do drama of this kind.

25. We may not be able to answer the question 'What is it that the teacher is teaching?'(38), but at least we can show what he is doing. Further, we can show how the children cope with what he is doing and what they are doing as they engage in drama. We can see, too, what may be drawn out of the situation they have managed together. We may answer the question 'What have they learned?' as we look at what they do(39).

#### Spontaneous Learning.

26. Gordon Wells in his time at Bristol(40), worked towards substantiating the hypothesis that particular kinds of 'conversational experiences' will have beneficial effects upon the linguistic ability of those who engage in them, encouraging them to make use of more complex formulations in their talk(41). From his research it would appear that the kinds of interaction which are most helpful are characterised by two distinct features. In the first place, they are likely to contain a large number of acknowledgements by the adult of the child's contributions and so will be used actively to encourage the child to initiate topics of interest to him. In such an exchange the adult would be concerned to extend and expand the child's utterances so that he may be helped to appreciate the implications of his words and come to understand what he is saying(42).



Secondly, such a conversation would contain a

'large number of directives and utterances related to the child's current activity or to the joint activity of child and adult'(43).

Clearly, if conversations with these features are to be successfully managed, then the adult must interpret the child's contribution in the light of the immediate context and the focus of their joint attention. He must try to understand the child's point of view. The adult also has to ensure that his own contributions are closely related to those of the child so that the developing situation may continue to make sense to him. Finally, the adult's contribution (though modified in timing, form and content to the child's receptive capacities) must provide the means whereby the child can enlarge his linguistic resources. Wells is able to show how a mother by

'drawing upon a variety of conversational resources ("cohesion, ellipsis, rising tone", "continuing moves", etc.)'

is able to extend the topic that the child has proposed and so draw his attention to the observable event and to the form in which that event is linguistically encoded (44). She is striving to make sense of the child's world, and the overall strategy seems to be to accept the child's initiation and then help him to develop and sustain it(45).

27. The adult in these 'facilitating conversational exchanges' may be seen to be leading 'from behind' and letting the child take the initiative. However, it is

important to appreciate that he does lead and that all his work as the adult contributor (the attention to the child's utterances and his 'meanings', the extensions and the elaborations, the adjustments, the use of "mother's speech", etc.) is motivated primarily by his concern to 'keep the conversation going' so that the child can see where he is and come to understand what is happening. As Garnica pointed out, there is not here an intention to teach, but rather a determination on the adult's part to make communication with the child more effective, and a willingness to try and appreciate the child's point of view(46). The adult is concerned to

'understand and be understood, to keep [the child's mind] focused on the same topic'(47),

and by adopting this attitude he shows the child what he must do in order to find the world a sensible place (48).

28. All conversations, though, are not of this 'facilitating' kind, and as Nelson(49) showed, there are two dimensions to the mother's behaviour that are important for the linguistic development of the child. The first is the extent to which she is directive of the interaction, the extent to which she adopts, in Bernstein's terminology, 'a positional role'(50). The second dimension is the extent to which she accepts a child's offering, the extent to which she is prepared to come to some negotiation about meaning rather than attempting to impose her own 'meanings' on the

situation. It appears from this research that adults adopt some kind of preference in the 'style' with which they approach their 'conversations' with children and this may be seen in the way in which they encourage (or discourage) the child from initiating conversations, the extent to which they cast the child in the role of responder, their use of pseudo-questions, their inclination to accept the child's contribution and not see it as inadequate or in need of correction, and things of this kind. It seems fairly clear that children who have a conversational partner who is generally supportive rather than directive will be able to make more linguistically mature contributions to a conversation(51). This extra maturity would seem to be due, according to Wells, to the opportunities made available by his adult partner's style of interaction and from the fact that the topic under discussion developed from the child's initiation and concerned a matter of immediate interest to him.

29. Conversely, situations in which the adult supplies the information and then checks that the child has understood, are likely to encourage only minimal responses from the child and provide little opportunity for his language to develop beyond this. It seems a shame that when we look at typical teacher/pupil exchanges in school, characterised by the 'three-part exchange' of teacher initiation, pupil response and teacher evaluation, we are reminded forcefully of those

adult/child 'conversations' in which the adult adopted a 'positional role' and was highly directive of the interaction. The minimal replies expected of the child in such learning situations are hardly likely to do justice to the child's linguistic ability; nor are they designed to encourage him to express his understanding in a way that is going to influence his learning(52).

As Barnes pointed out,

'showing a teacher your work is not the same as explaining what you have done'(53),

for the latter requires a reinterpretation of the task.

It seems important to consider why so few school learning situations seem to offer the linguistic encouragement provided by the 'enabling home', and why the language of our classrooms would appear to have a stultifying effect upon the child's linguistic development(54). How is it, that

'a five year old child who speaks when he wants to becomes the ten year old who waits to be nominated?'(55).

School Learning: the relationship between the teacher and the pupil.

30. On one level, of course, the answer is fairly straightforward, for the child has simply learned what he has to do in order that he may contribute properly to the 'social participation structure' of the school lesson. He has learned how to be seen and treated as a pupil, how to play his part in the business of creating the social reality of school, and we have to appreciate that this learning has been going on for a very long

time. As Tizard and Hughes make clear, at nursery school the teachers' control concerns are with

'getting the children to follow the school routine' (56).

However, we should ask how it is that 'schooling' is presented in this way, through the three-part exchange, the extra 'rights' of the teacher, and the child having to sit back and take what comes, and this leads us back to the way in which we naturally treat the social world as something beyond us and of which we have to make sense(57). It takes us back to the nature of knowledge. So, in our classrooms the topic is usually with the teacher who 'has something to teach'. That is why he is there, and why the children have come to his class, and that is why they are forced into the role of respondent. Our view of knowledge as something 'built up' over thousands of years, as existing beyond our individual experiences and perceptions, as something which is simply there for everyone to share (and they have the wit and the opportunity), is displayed in our classrooms through the roles of teachers and pupils. The teachers are taught (and taught again) to 'pass on' what is known, that the children may learn about the world out there beyond the classroom, for the business of teaching is no part of what is taught, and what is 'learned' is not an aspect of the child's learning. There may be all kinds of doubts and disagreements about the best way of teaching what there is to know (and even about what it

is worth knowing) but few doubt that there is 'something to know' and most people know who has this knowledge and who has come to get it.

31. It is assumed, quite naturally, that at first the teacher and the child view the topic from quite different perspectives but by the end of a 'successful lesson' the teacher will have taught the child something of what he knows so that the child, too, may now be able to 'see' the world 'as it is' and understand the way things are. Such a view implies not only that there is some kind of 'real knowledge' independent of our ability to construct meaningful situations, but also that it is possible for one person to get another to 'see the world his way'. It assumes a 'congruency of perspectives' (58) within a social world which exists beyond the work done by those involved to make it visible. It is to achieve these unlikely ends that teachers and pupils labour day by day and everyday. Clearly, whilst they are all concerned to present this kind of objective reality based upon the control of knowledge, any conversational exchanges which do take place are likely to be 'directive' of the child rather than 'supportive'. They will, therefore, be of little value in helping the child to make linguistically mature contributions and anything that he does say will be judged according to the teacher's perspective as the controller of knowledge(59). Naturally, the child is likely to be found wanting and in need of more teaching. Teaching

like this is hard; the teacher's knowledge is unassailable and no child will get hold of it, though in their management they may appear to do so.

32. It is not that conversational exchanges do not take place in classrooms but rather, because of the constraints imposed by our attempts to 'pass on' knowledge, they are not a familiar part of the teacher/pupil interaction. Further, when they do occur they are likely to have limited value, for the children and teachers converse within a generally unhelpful environment. This will exist whilst we treat our schools as places where knowledge is passed from those who know to those who do not know, whilst we treat knowledge as something which the teachers have and the children do not yet have, and whilst, as a result, we give the teacher extra 'rights' to ensure that he has control not only of the 'academic task structure', but of the 'social participation structure' as well. For so long as these attitudes persist, children and their teachers will only be more or less successful in this business of 'transferring knowledge', and much of what they do 'achieve' will be the result of the constraints (the rewards and punishments, the incentives) with which this kind of 'learning' is hedged about(60). This will endure for so long as teachers are seen to be teaching. The drama we have been examining offers a way out and a chance for another kind of teaching which may be seen as

'not a didactic transmission of preformulated knowledge, but an attempt to negotiate shared

meanings and understandings'(61).

It also provides the possibility for another kind of learning to become a part of each child's experience of school.

Drama: the relationship between the teacher and the pupil.

33. If a group of children and their teacher are presenting experience dramatically then the teacher's contributions as well as those of the children must be made in terms of the developing context made visible through their talk and actions. If the teacher makes any attempt to wield his extra 'rights' as a teacher, if he attempts to work as a teacher in the drama, then that very drama will be put at risk. He has to be careful and ever mindful of what the children are saying and doing, and he must be sensitive to the situation they are creating together. It is not possible for him to take a directly authoritarian role and simply tell the others the way they should behave, for then he will have no drama. He has to lead from behind, and whilst there must be 'an intention to teach' his prime concern must be 'to make communication with the child more effective' so that he may appreciate the child's point of view (62). It is quite possible for learning in drama to take place without the 'teacher' being 'present'. Indeed, this 'living through' drama (where every contribution is made properly, being sensitive to, and taking account of, the developing context of which it is



a part) will ensure that this happens. Furthermore, the children have the opportunity to take part in the formulation of knowledge as they interact with the 'teacher' as a concerned adult, rather than as the one who knows all the answers and is there to see what they have picked up(63). One of the most extraordinary outcomes of this piece of research for me, was to discover the way in which children who had worked with a teacher for a year could yet in a moment treat him as a 'stranger' and so alter radically the way in which they related to him(64). This is a wonderful thing and we have to take advantage of it, for sometimes it is good to get rid of the teacher(65).

School Learning: the relationship between knowledge and the teaching context.

34. It is also a problem for teachers in school that so much of what counts as 'school learning' is divorced from the situation within which it takes place. During the pre-school years the child's learning is bound up with the situation in which he finds himself and is characterised by the conversational exchanges to which he is able to make a positive contribution. He actively participates in the business of making sense of his world. Of course he does not just stop doing this when he comes to school, and it should not be surprising, therefore, that the social participation structure (at this time the context of 'teachers and pupils') should dominate his life in school as it did whilst at home

(66). Unfortunately because this school context is so narrowly defined, his learning within it is bound to be impoverished. It lacks variety, the child is always on the receiving end and he knows very well and at an early age how to play at being teachers and pupils. Surely, as well, every child knows what it means to be intimidated by the teaching situation so that it is impossible not to seem foolish, and he knows, too, that beyond the business of learning French or history is the business of being 'good' or 'bad' pupils, for it is by their actions on this level that children contribute to a situation that may be recognised as 'schooling'. The children are busy being (and presenting themselves as being) bright, awkward, steady, helpful, disobedient, intelligent, untidy, neat, careless and so on, and they have to do these things (and much more) all of the time. Furthermore, they are constantly receiving attention (and being treated as pupils) as they are praised, chastised, encouraged and even ignored. They are involved in producing and sustaining a highly structured, visible experience (even the most disruptive pupil is constrained by 'proper' behaviour if he is to be 'seen' and appreciated as 'disruptive'), and it is a situation which everyone has helped to construct and which everyone finds familiar. Then, somehow, over and above all of this activity the teacher attempts to 'graft on' some knowledge, some learning that will almost certainly have but a tenuous connection with the

situation they are so busily involved in creating. It is hardly surprising if the impact of this 'subject matter' may be slight, and really no wonder that we find ourselves, as teachers, going over and over the same things, again and again. The teacher might wish he could say, 'Now let us stop being teachers and pupils for a bit so that I can concentrate on teaching you something'. Unfortunately, there is no time out, and it is this kind of 'conscious teaching' that is such hard work for everyone. It is not at all like the learning we did before we came to school.

Drama: the relationship between knowledge and the teaching context.

35. Once again, though, drama of the kind we have been examining so closely, offers us a chance to bring together the business of learning and that which is learned. Indeed, looking at the transcript, it would not be possible to talk of what these children had learned without talking in terms of what they did. In situations of this kind, that which we come to know can be directly related to the activities by which that situation was made visible and meaningful(67). Of course, as we have seen, we will 'know' different things and know things differently but we will be able to understand each other and we will come away with a 'shared experience' which all of us have helped to produce(68). We should not be afraid that we have not a common experience beyond our individual perceptions that

we can point to and say, 'this we have learned today', for that is a quality of a syllabus rather than an aspect of human understanding. The kind of learning engaged in as we collaborate in the presentation of experience (whether we wish to treat it as everyday or make-believe) is part of the social life and part of the means by which we give to that life a sense of reality and structure. It is part of the business of making life meaningful(69).

36. In learning situations of this kind it is not possible to distinguish that which was learned from the activities through which it was learned; it is all part of the same thing, the business of presenting and sustaining the social life. Think, for instance, of trying to disentangle the learning about religious belief from the presentation of that belief; think of what Shirley did and of what she learned. Indeed, when we are concerned to understand the great themes of human experience we have to work in this way, for they can only be characterised by reference to situations in which people are jealous, lonely, afraid and so on. When we are concerned to make sense of this business of living there is no alternative but to get involved, and we should not be afraid to do so. This is not to say that all school learning should be of this kind, only that it should not be neglected for it will always be there as the social life of school is presented. The generation of a social context should infuse our

learning not militate against it.

37. If the learning is part of the situation within which the learning takes place then so, too, is the teaching. This is not just in the sense of 'teaching by stealth' through the dramatic situation, for it is also the case that at times the teaching and learning become so inextricably entwined that it is hard to know who is 'teaching' and who 'learning'. We may look, for instance, at the way in which the teacher/stranger is made to confront his own condition in the final section of the transcript(70). If we consider the guardians as they present, through the symbol of the blind, deaf father, the consequences of the stranger's decision to climb, we may well feel that it is the children who are doing the teaching. Certainly, the teacher felt he learned by the experience and at the end it seems as though it is the stranger who is brought to new levels of understanding by the activities of the guardians. The point is, that within the dramatic context distinctions of this kind cannot be made, for the teaching and the learning have been transformed by the drama. They are now aspects of the dramatic situation. In this sense learning, too, is achieved by 'stealth' (71).

#### THE NATURE OF LEARNING IN DRAMA.

##### 1. The situated quality of the learning.

38. If we are to appreciate something of the learning which takes place in drama of this kind we have to look,

as this study has attempted to look, at the work these children must do to make the dramatic situation visible and their meaning plain(72). The way in which they engage in this co-operative activity, as they are sensitive to one another and to the context they have created and are concerned to sustain, attests to their learning. By seeing what they do we can consider the quality and nature of their learning which may not be apparent to one simply watching the drama. It is not, for instance, a piece of drama about volcanoes, and those involved do not have to know about volcanoes to do drama about people who live by volcanoes or to examine the feelings of such 'by-volcano' dwelling villagers. Or rather, they might, if that was our concern in the drama. Our concern here, though, is to examine the feelings of those involved in coping with the kind of threat the volcano provides. In this, the volcano works as an image. We are not here to learn more about living by volcanoes, but about living as we do, here and now. The volcano gives us the chance to do this. In the way that drama is a poor medium for learning about vulcanicity, so the facts of vulcanicity have limited use in drama and, as we have seen, this drama quickly moved beyond the advantages of living by volcanoes to an examination of the significance of such a threat and the way in which it may also become a symbol of unity for the people living beneath it. But still there is much more to the drama, for out of this are generated those

themes which are directly relevant to our own experience of life and which are presented through the activities of those engaged in the drama. If this drama was about 'by-volcano' dwelling people, and not also about the lives of those engaged in the drama, it would have been poor stuff. All the business of being presented as strangers and experts, the testing of the stranger's worth, the waiting before an important event, the threats of the guardians in their two different forms, are aspects of our everyday lives and of everyone's everyday lives. They are familiar experiences generated out of new situations. They are familiar forms of life(73). Further, the children's ability to contribute properly is an aspect of that learning. It is highly constructive in that they are involved in the business of redefining 'reality' for themselves; presenting social experience. This has not just happened but was made to happen by everyone involved. As we have seen, it is learning about the business of making life meaningful by making life meaningful, and it is happening in the transcript, here before our eyes(74).

39. Linked with this we may see how the 'generative force' within 'meaning making' situations leads to new levels of understanding(75). For instance, the background structure imposed by the teacher at the start of the drama was just sufficient to get it underway ('You are a person who lives...by a volcano...and I'm a stranger', p.21: 01-04). Yet the themes which we later

presented and explored in the drama (such as authority, acceptance and betrayal, group membership and outsiders, responsibility for actions, etc.) were marked out by this simple structure(76). They developed from this as the context developed, and they were described by the 'social participation structure' through which they were made visible to those involved, as well as to us as outside observers. They were not 'given' in the beginning, but they were drawn from (as might have been countless other possibilities which were never realised) that basic structure of the stranger, the volcano and the people who lived by it(77). The themes were elaborated alongside the dramatic context, were an aspect of that context, though later, as we shall see, they may be detached from their basis in 'common experience' and linked with other times and other people(78). For the moment we should appreciate that all the teacher wanted to know at the beginning was why they lived beneath such a dangerous volcano. It is this generative force which, whilst pushing the drama forward and ever elaborating the context, serves as well to keep everyone in touch, for we can only fare forward when we know where we are. We may not know where we are going, but we know how we got here. Once again we may appreciate that within drama of this type the learning which goes on is an aspect of the situation within which it takes place(79).

40. Whilst the general themes of the drama are



generated from within so, too, are the shifts in understanding enjoyed by the children. We have noted a number of occasions when the children, in seeming to encapsulate the developing situation in a single phrase or sentence, move to levels of understanding beyond that which they could have articulated within more regular teacher/pupil exchanges(80). In a sense, of course, this could be said of all contributions to interactions of this kind, but still some do seem to reach extra levels of meaning. Shirley's cry of, 'No, I just shouted and...and they never heard me!'(23: 14-16) and later, 'It's terrible if you lost one like that.' (48: 12), are good examples(81). They are locked inextricably into the 'social participation structure' of which they are a part (and, of course, have to be relocated if they are to be fully appreciated). They come out of the child's sensitive orientation towards the dramatic context which she has helped to create and through which she is described and made visible(82). We only have to think of Julia 'serving tea'(67: 19 to 68: 09), in order to appreciate how effective this kind of involvement can be, and we shall look at this incident in more detail in the next chapter(83).

41. It would be difficult to over stress the importance of learning within a social context. Vygotsky, for instance, claims that

'.....properly organised learning results in mental development'(84),

and the part which needs to be properly organised is the

context in which that learning takes place. For

Vygotsky, the child is first a social being:

'Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later, on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological).....and then inside the child (intra-psychological). All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals'(85).

The significant contribution to this cultural

development comes, of course, from the adult and

'knowing' peers who can help the child to levels of

achievement beyond his 'developmental stage'. This

extra achievement is referred to by Vygotsky as the

'zone of proximal development' and he describes it as,

'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers'(86).

Indeed, as Vygotsky makes clear, the developmental

processes are able to operate,

'only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with his peers' (87).

There could be few more telling reasons for engaging in

drama of this kind which stresses the collaborative

nature of the learning process through which the child,

'by using the help of others....gains consciousness and perspective under his own control, [and] reaches "higher ground"(88).

Finally, during recent years, Bruner has come to lay

great stress upon the communal activity involved in most

learning situations. Indeed, this seems to be at the

heart of his thinking;

'I have come increasingly to recognise that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. It is not just that the child must make knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture. It is this that leads me to emphasise not only discovery and invention but the importance of negotiating and sharing - in a word, of joint culture creating as an object of schooling and as an appropriate step en route to becoming a member of the adult society in which one lives out one's life'(89).

42. All of this gives support to the kind of learning which we have focused upon in this study. It helps us to appreciate how a child may come to see what he means or 'intends' as he experiences how others take his meaning; how we are all responsible for 'putting people in their place'. It emphasises the social construction of experience from which we may take a 'subjective meaning' and a personal point of view. It moves the point of meaningfulness away from some inner appreciation to the work done (through words and actions) to make our experience of life appear real. It provides a justification for the teacher's involvement in the child's learning, and for the teacher drawing out extra levels of meaning from their activities. It encourages us to see the child and her teacher working hand-in-hand as they engage in a learning situation, within which each helps the other to understand what is going on. We see them keep 'in touch' through their activities as contributors to a make-believe or everyday experience. This is 'spontaneous learning' within a teaching context.

## 2. Universalising the dramatic experience.

43. However, though this may be impressive, it need not and should not, be the limit of their learning. It is possible to move away from the situated experience which all involved have shared (and within which they feel 'at home' as they had a part in its creation) so that it may be 'generalised' and related to other places and other times(90). This kind of reflection can take place within the drama, as in the 'waiting time' (46: 01 to 52: 18), where those involved did as all people do who wait, and dwelt upon their situation(91). Alternatively, it can occur after the drama, as the participants consider what happened and connect their experiences with those of other people (92). Dorothy Heathcote talks of

'the moment of reflection that plummets to universal experience'(93).

In this sense it may be seen as the point of the dramatic activity, the opportunity to connect the experience with that of other people, to give it meaning within a universal context. It is this reflection which shifts the experience from the situated context of its creation towards a 'greater knowledge' produced by countless interactive exchanges(94). It puts our activities on a human plane and keeps us in touch with humankind. It is not just an aspect of dramatic activity, but part of the meaning making process. It is drawn out of the work done to present a form of life and

it then serves to make that form of life meaningful.

Dorothy Heathcote points to this deeper level of understanding here;

'Keeping in touch with universal myths and themes..  
....keeps me in touch with myself to recognise the  
forces in myself at deeper levels than the task  
level of living my life [presenting experience]'.  
'

She then continues,

'building a language for expression and for  
reflection is important in the growth of people so  
that they remain in touch with who and what they  
are'(95).

44. It is also the path by which we may move from the  
everyday experience of the social life towards the  
highly abstracted 'forms of knowledge' which seem to  
characterise so much of school learning(96). It is not  
just the nature of this knowledge but the way in which  
it is presented and evaluated which should give us  
pause; the way in which it is rarified. Indeed, the  
ability to generalise from the situated experience is  
essential if we are to be considered educated and  
knowledgeable, and

'experience without reflection leaves the person  
hungering for more'(97).

So, this approach to learning is not simply offering  
an alternative to the more regular curriculum of our  
schools, but rather, providing another way into school  
knowledge based upon the child's experience and his  
centre of interest. Of course, the knowledge needed to  
contribute properly to the management of social  
situations is of quite a different order, but the  
ability to reflect upon those situations transforms the

experience and enables us to connect our understanding with other places and other times. Drama of this kind puts us in touch with the methods and practices by which we make the everyday life seem meaningful and real, but it also affords us the chance to link our lives to the experience of others(98). In this sense the activity of reflection, the context of reflection and that about which we reflect are aspects of each other. Only consider the 'waiters' who wait and reflect upon the nature of their waiting. On both levels, 'living through' drama keeps us in our place. We know where we are, and we know who we are. We can understand what is going on and we can connect our experiences with the wider world(99).

45. The difference between this kind of learning and the more regular forms of teaching in our schools, is that the knowledge is drawn out of the learning experience generated through the dramatic activity. It is not separated from the process of learning, but made meaningful within the learning situation. That which we learn and the way in which it is learned and made visible are aspects of a single experience. The 'social participation structure' and the 'academic task structure' are drawn together. So, it is not that the abstract and rarified forms of knowledge are to be discounted, but that they should be shown to be drawn out of the social experience of making life meaningful. We need to keep our feet upon the ground. We need to be

in touch with the everyday world in which scientists and historians, mathematicians and philosophers are characterised through the way of their working, as they talk and act. I am not asking here that drama should be used to teach, say mathematics, but rather that mathematics (for example) should infuse our lives and be a part of our experience. It is to do with bringing an appropriate response to an everyday situation, as Shirley did when she drew upon religious experience to account for her 'knowledge', and by so doing developed her religious understanding and the context within which it was demonstrated. Drama can give life to our learning and bring learning to our lives(100). Wells states the problem clearly when he claims that,

'the vast majority of the child's talk at home arises out of its immediate activities and interests but this is much less obviously true of the classroom where informational content is related to the curriculum and teacher controlled in that they seek to assimilate almost every object, event or item of information to a frame of reference which is both more abstract than demanded by the immediate situation and with which they happen to be more familiar than their pupils'(101).

46. So, whilst it is one of the main purposes of formal education to bring the children to these 'broader frames of reference', we have to bear in mind that

'too abrupt a transition can be bewildering for children whose pre-school experience has been interpreted largely in terms of personally initiated practical activities'(102).

Clearly, it is possible, through the presentation of dramatic experience, to encourage children to engage in 'personally initiated practical activities' of the kind

with which they are familiar. However, it is also possible, through reflection, to connect dramatically presented experience with the abstract forms of knowledge, the 'broader frames of reference'. The task is, to

'help children to recognise and cope with problems that are disembedded from their context of practical everyday experience without quenching the personal involvement and creativity that they have developed for success in dealing with contextually embedded problems'(103).

The children in this drama are addressing the problem head on, and producing some solutions(104). Indeed, it is important that they do, for the problem of introducing children to academic and rarified knowledge in such a way that it is not disconnected from their everyday experience, is at the heart of school learning. There has to be a connection if we are to talk of understanding and there are, as Cooper suggests, two sides to a well-functioning adult. There is;

'the practical side [which] consists in managing or coping with one's environment, where the environment is social as well as physical, [and] there is the theoretical side [which] consists in making sense of and understanding one's environment'.

Further, as Cooper points out, they are connected, since,

'understanding one's environment enables one to cope with it better, and being able to manage one's environment helps one to understand it and amounts to a kind of practical understanding'.

He then concludes,

'It is my contention that education and indeed the whole cognitive enterprise should have both aims' (105).



Wells has similar concerns and wonders whether,

'sufficient efforts are made through pupil initiated tasks, field work and open ended discussion to bridge the gap between the relatively abstract formulations of knowledge in the classroom and the children's first hand experience of the world of real activities outside'(106).

He then draws upon Bruner's work when he suggests that although

'the value of formal education for intellectual development may lie in the fact that it is separated from the context of immediately relevant activity.....that does not mean that it should lose touch with its base in such activity: indeed, without such a base to provide its material, and as a proving ground in which to test out the conclusions reached through symbolic operations classroom learning can become an empty formalism'(107).

47. Drama of the kind we have examined, provides just such a base in activity(108), but it can only be used when it has been allowed to run its course. We may not be able to tell where we are going, but we can look back when we have arrived and we can think about what we have done. Indeed, it is only by making visible the social life, through everyday experience or through anecdote, story, or dramatic presentation, that we may come to consider the great themes of human experience which are characterised as they are made visible through the managed construction of social situations. Put simply, we can only consider the nature of 'jealousy' in situations where it makes sense to talk of people being jealous. This requires a particular kind of context, social, literary, historical or religious and it demands a setting. We cannot 'pass on' these themes but must

deal with them by example taken from life.

3. Developing abilities for learning and living.

48. It may be, as well, that the dramatic presentation of experience moves us along the path to literacy.

Kress makes the point when he says that,

'Literacy has to be learned, and it is a great help if the child has already been introduced to the structures of literacy before school'.

He then goes on to say,

'there is evidence that these structures are carried in the everyday speech of highly literate people'(109).

Whilst not wishing to claim too much on behalf of drama teachers and their standards of literacy, this does seem to suggest another way in which the presentation of experience through drama may influence other aspects of the child's work in school. It is important to see how this may work, for great claims are made on behalf of drama as a means of developing language. Wells goes some way towards answering these claims when he describes learning language and learning through language as being 'to a very considerable degree co-extensive'. He considers that the

'significance of this parallelism is far-reaching for it implies that, in so far as the child's learning takes place through linguistic interaction with more mature members of his culture, the responsibility for what is learned should be shared between learner and teacher in the same kind of way that it was in the early stages of language acquisition: the child expressing an interest in some object or event and the adult sharing that interest and helping the child to take it further' (110).

Phillips produces reasons why the more familiar forms of

classroom discussion can have an adverse effect upon the child's concern to use his speech skills to the full. He contrasts, unfavourably, the teacher/child talk with peer group talk, in which the child feels he has a positive and demanding contribution to make. He suggests that children do not use their language in the range of ways which they use it amongst themselves when talking with an adult;

'It is not that they could not use their language in every one of these ways when in conversation with an adult; it is simply that they do not because they expect adults to be knowledgeable and thus less open to challenges, questions and suggestions. Their perceptions of the linguistic options open to them in peer group interaction are different from their perceptions of the options which are offered by conversation with an adult'(111).

It is not difficult to appreciate how a child in role as an expert may talk with extra confidence to a teacher in role as a stranger. It is also interesting to see how the children come to adopt roles as adults as the drama progresses and are, therefore, able to 'challenge, question and suggest'. They have different expectations concerning their ability to contribute once they are freed from the constraints of classroom talk. Phillips then considers what teachers might do to facilitate and foster good talking practice in children of around eleven and twelve instead of 'going back to the basics'.

He asks:

'How might they take children "forward to fundamentals" in terms of such fundamental life-skills as: (a) being able to argue in a way which is rational and does not confuse the argument with

its proponent; (b) being able to reflect upon and evaluate ideas and experiences; and (c) being able to adopt a style of language which is appropriate for the purpose it is intended to serve?'(112).

He goes on to suggest that it is always easier to give advice than to put it into practice, but could we not point to this drama as an example (if a rudimentary one) of these 'life-skills' at work? Consider, after all, the way in which these children argue and discuss their case, reflect upon their experience and contribute in an appropriate manner. Are they not being taken 'forward to fundamentals'?(113).

49. On another level, Wells points to the 'extent of a child's mastery of literacy' as being the 'major determinant of educational achievement', and concludes from the evidence of the longitudinal study that the basis of this mastery is set in the home and

'particularly in the pre-school years and the first year or two at school'.

He claims that

'growing up in a literate family environment... gives children a particular advantage when they start their formal education',

and adds,

'of all the activities that were characteristic of such homes, it was the sharing of stories that we found to be most important'(114).

The reason for this, according to Wells, is that

'hearing stories introduces children to language being used in a way which is independent of any context other than that created by the language itself'(115).

50. This is the ability to deal with the 'disembedded language' which is characteristic of school lessons, for

'so much of the experience that makes up the school curriculum can only be encountered in the classroom in symbolic form - in the spoken words of the teacher and in textbooks and works of reference' (116).

Now, the language used by the children in the drama is not 'disembedded' in this sense (indeed, throughout the study, I have argued the very opposite) but neither is it necessary to provide information beyond the words used by those involved in order to make sense of what is going on. Of course, here and there certain contributions will be obscure, but generally the reader will be able to understand the narrative of the drama simply from reading the transcript. In other words it is possible, by making a transcript, to 'disembed' the language and yet still find it meaningful. This is particularly true of the first section in which the children and the stranger discuss the 'by-volcano dwelling' life (pp.21-30). In this sense, the 'living through' is a context for their discussion in which, of course, the language takes symbolic form. It can also be seen to work very clearly in the 'waiting time' (pp.46-52), as the children and the stranger consider their lives beyond the waiting. This surely tells us something about the way in which the drama was produced in the first place, and may point to another of the ways in which this speech is different from everyday speech; another of the ways in which we signal we are engaged in the dramatic presentation of experience. Might it not also be that the 'meaningfulness' of the transcript, and

the evidence of discussion within the drama, encourage us to feel that it is moving the children towards symbolic forms of language even as it draws upon their skill in using such forms? The drama is directly contributing to their ability to work in the way that is needed if they are to succeed in formal education.

51. However, apart from the contribution stories make to the acquisition of literacy, Wells suggests that constructing

'stories in the mind - or storying, as it has been called - is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such it is an activity which pervades all aspects of learning'.

He concludes,

'Through the exchange of stories, therefore, teachers and students can share their understandings of a topic and bring their mental models of the world into closer alignment. In this sense, stories and storying are relevant in all areas of the curriculum'(117).

I would like to go further, and suggest that it is this 'accounting' which is the basis of the social life and it is through the construction of a narrative that we give a sense of facticity and structure to our experience and so find it meaningful. It is not the case that these narratives, stories, anecdotes, and dramatic episodes reflect life, for rather, are they the very means by which we see that life and make it meaningful. It is exactly what these children are doing here, as they present the social life through their drama. They are providing a form and a structure by which we can see the everyday life as being real and

meaningful. By treating this drama (or the story) as a representation of everyday life, as a managed accomplishment, and then showing it to be ordered and structured, we impart that very quality to ordinary living. We provide it with a sense of reality and are then able to find it meaningful. Without these stories there could be no social life(118).

#### 4. Learning about the social life.

52. So, and perhaps most important of all, as we come to consider afterwards (in the way that this study has attempted to consider) the manner in which the people involved created contexts whereby the themes of the drama were presented, we may come to appreciate more clearly the nature of experience in everyday life. Our drama may not only come to cast a little more meaning into our lives, but show as well, how our lives are made meaningful. We could be helping the children to 'de-mystify' the everyday life(119).

53. The business of showing each other what we mean by presenting situations in drama, and then looking at what we have done in order to make sense, seems like a worthwhile activity. I think it has been neglected. It is rather like looking at our drama in the way in which we are happy to look at, say, a Shakespeare play. Not only are we concerned to look for intentions, but also to study the form and structure; the technique by which those intentions are made plain. Of course, the degree

to which we can do this depends upon the ages of the children involved. It also means that the session has to be recorded and, if possible, a transcript made so that the activity can be analysed in the manner of this study. There will not be time to do this very often, but these children were able to make very useful comments upon the taped recording of their work and they began, guided by thoughtful questioning(120), to appreciate the kind of work that was done in order to create dramatic experience. The fascinating thing is that drama, even that which is improvised and unprepared, can reveal a structure when examined in this way. It is from here of course, but a step to considering how everyday life may be managed. Analysis of this kind could lead to an understanding of the ways in which social experience may be presented and sustained, and this needs no justification. It is an aspect of 'reflecting upon experience' which may be neglected in drama lessons where such an activity is seen as considering the experience rather than (as well) the way in which it was managed and produced. Of course, this kind of appreciation of the work done in making meanings is not available to us as we go about the business of presenting experience dramatically. Only afterwards can we see how we managed to be meaningful; only upon reflection can we make sense(121).

"I didn't think I was being as kind as that", said Beverley, as we talked afterwards, and listened to



extracts from the transcript(122).

54. John Norman lists five questions that seem  
'to.....represent the natural sequence of  
realising knowledge through the drama process'.  
(123)

The questions are 'just categories' and they focus upon action ("What has happened in our drama?"), upon individual contributions and problems ("What did you do in the drama?"), upon meaning arising from action ("Why did you do such and such?"), upon hypothesising and projecting outcomes of actions ("What would have happened if.....?") and upon extrapolating meaning from action and then suggesting avenues of future exploration ("Why do you think people do this in such and such?").

55. To these we might now want to add questions which focus upon the managed quality of the drama; a quality which is directly related to the way in which we present everyday life(124). Such questions would be directed towards individual and group contributions, and to the way in which the contributions connect with one another; they would serve to bring out the work done by those involved in presenting a context within which their actions and words become meaningful. On a simple level they would be of the form, 'How did you demonstrate your disapproval/ your priestliness/ your care, etc.?', 'What did you do in order to be taken as man and wife?', 'How did you present the blind man (to Ian), and how (to the others) did you bring out his disability?'(125). By looking at the drama in this way, the children may come

to appreciate the need to sustain situations and see that it is not enough simply to be given the part of a priest. They may even, in time, be able to move towards an appreciation of the work done in everyday life to give it a sense of stability and continuity. It should help them to see the kind of responsibility they have for the presentation of the social life. If, through such an examination of our drama, we can set the children on the path which leads them eventually to question the social life itself, and get behind the assumptions about its facticity which seem to have such a depressing effect on those least able to help themselves whilst fuelling the fighting spirit in those determined to come out on top, then we shall have done everyone a service. I think that an appreciation of the collaborative nature of the work done to present situations in drama and make them meaningful will, in time, affect our attitudes to everyday living. This then becomes the business of knowing about the way ('the methods and practices') by which we present our everyday experience as real. Drama does not only have implications for how we teach and treat children, and for our understanding of learning; it also has implications for the way in which we live(126).

56. When considering the learning which has taken place in drama of this kind, I would be content to point to the work done by these children that they may present experience dramatically. It always seemed like a

worthwhile activity, but I hope this study has helped to show that faith in drama is well founded. Producing situations like these recorded in the transcripts is demanding. It is demanding intellectually as well as emotionally. It demands sensitivity and care(127).

57. Gavin Bolton describes four stages towards a change in understanding and calls the last of these 'modification'. He points out that

'only when the work is at an experiential feeling level can change in understanding take place. The modification can take many forms, some of which have already been touched on. Various metaphorical terms are used in an attempt to describe the insightful change that can take place: refining, extending, widening, making more flexible, shifting bias, breaking stereotype, giving new slant, challenging, casting doubt, questioning assumptions, facing decisions, seeing new implications, anticipating consequences, trying alternatives, widening range of choice, changing perspective.

Vague as this terminology is and intangible as the results may be in research terms, I claim that it is the most significant form of learning directly attributable to drama experience'(128).

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING IN DRAMA.

58. I have tried, in this study, to uncover the work done by a group of children and their teacher in order that the dramatic situation may be presented and made meaningful. I have tried, as well, to demonstrate the way in which each person's understanding of what is going on is part of their ability to contribute in an appropriate manner. In all of this, I hope that I have helped to focus on the nature of Bolton's 'insightful, change', so that it may be discussed in less

'metaphorical terms'. It should also make the results, 'in research terms', more tangible and enable us to point to what goes on when we present experience dramatically with more confidence and precision). In this sense this study tells us nothing new, rather does it show us how we know what we know. It tells us a bit more about what is going on in a particular type of drama and points to the relevance which this might have for living in the social world.

59. John Norman asks us to look at the way in which we evaluate the learning outcomes of drama teaching:

'We talk a great deal about "drama as a learning medium" but we are woefully sloppy about evaluation. We...have to ensure that learning opportunities arise in our practice but also to identify possible and actual learning outcomes in terms accessible to others and appropriate to the values of the medium itself'(129).

In order to achieve this we have to see what those involved do that they may present experience dramatically. I think it should be possible to say that if they can contribute 'properly' to a developing context (and within that context, so that their contributions are a part of that development) then we may point to learning taking place in the sense that there will be a change in understanding or perception (130). This may be only one step on the way to evaluation of the dramatic activity, but it is surely a very important one(131).

60. Of course, someone might want to ask what these children have learned about volcanoes by engaging in

this drama or whether activities of this kind might lead the children to enquire further into the nature of volcanoes(132). After all, it was clear from the discussion that their knowledge was limited, and it seems certain that these children have learned little about volcanoes, if knowledge of volcanoes is considered to consist of geo-physical information concerning the arrangement of our landscape. They have not learned much geology. Nor have they learned much if we think of knowledge suitable for eight year-old children as being of the form, 'I wonder what it would be like to live by a volcano?' (the problems, for instance, of farmers living on the slopes of Mt.Etna). We might even conclude that they have gone no further than the knowledge with which they started; that volcanoes were dangerous mountains spurring fire, and that the teacher had neglected his duty by leaving them with this childish and inaccurate view of volcanic activity. However, to think in this way would be to misunderstand the nature of the learning which has taken place, for these children have been engaged in

'enriching what is intellectually understood [however inadequately in their picture of volcanoes as mountains spewing fire and rocks] with subjective understanding [which] extends the range and sophistication of feeling'(133).

They have achieved this through the 'symbolic use of actions and objects' so that the volcano is invested with significance for those whose lives revolve around it. They have developed the group's attitude towards

'volcano life', built out of their interests and their concerns. In this, it does not, need not, correspond to any 'real' situation 'out there' and beyond their experience which they have in some way recreated to show and develop their group knowledge. We should not expect to find details of what it is like to live by volcanoes in drama of this kind, for the work done by these people is to draw out the symbolic significance of the volcano and they do this across many levels and to serve different purposes(134). The volcano, then, becomes a symbol of unity, a symbol of the group and the values to which they adhere. It stands as a symbol of what must be achieved in order to share in that life; it is a symbol of power, of guardianship, of success and failure. Throughout the drama it works to demonstrate the nature of the situation; it is constantly kept before us and its presence binds and provides a context within which to make sense of each person's contributions. Can we not feel that the creation of such a potent symbol points to a deep understanding of the place of volcanoes in the minds of humankind? Does it not relate the idea of volcanoes to the lives of people who see them as more than heaps of rock spouting fire, and are loath to reduce them to technical terms in a book on geology? It is 'understanding facts in action' rather than 'factual teaching'(135), with which drama is concerned. Of course, the children might want to find a book on volcanoes after working in this way,

but that is not why we did the drama, and is not this enough learning for one morning?

61. As Wagner points out, drama of this kind;

'is headed for a truth where mere facts are not what matter, for the deep knowing that makes information come alive and for experience that breeds energy' (136).

These children may have limited knowledge of volcanoes and volcanic activity, but that is not the kind of knowledge they are drawing upon here, not the kind of learning which is taking place. It is not their knowledge of volcanicity that gives life to this piece of drama. Further, it is interesting to see that we are aware of their limited knowledge of volcanoes through their contributions to the discussion and not through the way in which they contribute to the drama. In the drama all of the children seem to know exactly what they are about. They seem to be experts on all levels, and their success is an aspect of the 'worthwhileness' of the activity. It is worth doing because it works, as the presentation of experience must always work.

DRAMA: A WORTHWHILE ACTIVITY.

62. This business of making social experience visible and meaningful may be seen as an essential aspect of the human condition, for it is this which makes our behaviour significant. It is, therefore, a co-operative activity which is, of itself, worthwhile, and one that we engage in everyday that our humanity may be demonstrated. This means that we do not have to justify

our drama in terms of 'worthwhile knowledge' for the 'worthwhileness' of the drama lies in the activity itself, in the business of making social experience visible(137). It is worthwhile, as 'spontaneous learning' is worthwhile, and both are governed by the same inner motivation which encourages us to sustain meaningful contexts and which we looked at in the previous chapter(138). So, the themes which are presented, and the knowledge which is explored and developed, are all a part of our interest, as members, to present life dramatically. Not only is the teaching and learning itself an aspect of the dramatic context but so, too, is the justification for engaging in this kind of activity(139).

63. So we may say that by presenting experience dramatically we have the opportunity to create situations in our schools which are not characterised by the business of schooling. It gives us the chance to extend experience beyond the confines of the classroom and to redefine relationships (especially those between teachers and pupils). It enables us to keep our learning (and our knowledge) 'in touch' with our own experiences made visible through our contributions to a 'shared context' and defined by that context. And out of this collaborative activity comes a reformulation of knowledge, a new sense of understanding, and a belief that we have taken part in an experience which transcends our individual perceptions of that



experience. In this, drama reaffirms our trust in the social life by demonstrating the 'meaningfulness' of the activity. It provides a sure basis for our reflections and a firm foundation for the movement towards reflective thought, and it gives us the chance to see more clearly how our everyday social lives are created and sustained. This is the nature of the learning in drama, and it seems like a worthwhile activity to me.

64. In the final chapter we shall look at the way in which the last section of the drama is managed(140). As we do, the reader should keep in mind the claims made in the previous paragraph for learning through drama, and see the extent to which they are met by the work done to make this visit to the guardians on the mountain a visible and meaningful experience. In a sense it is a postscript (though a rather long one) and I hope it works to bring together many of the points we have considered. It is as if we had taken the drama apart in our analysis and were now concerned to put it back together again that we may see it as it should be seen. I hope some of our insights prove useful, but we have to keep in touch with the dramatic presentation or we have gained nothing. So I shall attempt now to bring the work full circle, for after all the analysis we end up with a well-made play and a piece of drama which makes sense.

## Chapter Nine.

### DRAMA AS A WELL-MADE PLAY.

1. I should like to complete this study by looking at one section of the drama in its entirety and as it was produced. It should enable us to see how everything comes together in order that a situation may be made visible and become a part of our experience. We should be able to see more clearly how drama works, how those involved impart a sense of unity to that which they are creating and how we can come to feel that we share a common experience which lies beyond our individual impressions and points of view. In working in this way I hope we shall come to appreciate that drama of this kind has all the appearances of a well-made play, and will bear the same kind of scrutiny as a play or a novel(1). So, instead of jumping about the transcript in order to make specific points, I intend to work through the final part of the drama in an orderly fashion that we may see just how it is managed and presented. We shall be concentrating upon the structure of the piece and relating it to the meaningfulness of the drama(2).

2. When we consider how this drama came about (without any preparation, and leading directly from a discussion about volcanoes) and also take regard of the ages of the children involved and the lack of experience of their teacher in this way of working, we may feel that the presence of an underlying form or structure within the piece would come as a surprise. We know that little

thought had gone into it, and we could reasonably think that such hastily improvised work would lack form and a sense of unity. Not enough planning appeared to have taken place to ensure that our act came together. So, we could, perhaps, expect the drama to appear haphazard and inconsequential. Yet, as we have seen already, this is not likely to be the case, for every contribution has a part to play in the meaningfulness of the situation (3). We shall find little or nothing which is out of place. We may think that such a piece of work is worthy of considerable respect for, as we shall see, the children manage to achieve quite extraordinary things.

3. However, we need to remember that the presence of this form or structure is, at first, nothing more but an assumption, though one that is sufficient to make it worth our while to undertake the kind of work necessary that we might demonstrate its presence and so find the situation visible and meaningful. It is not, in this sense, something which is 'put in' by those who do the talking and acting, rather is it discovered by people who would make sense of what the participants say and do. All of which means, of course, that this structure is not some kind of 'fixed thing' built into the situation and recoverable at any, and for all, time. It is a structure which is infinitely variable and which we find even as we attempt to interpret what is going on. We need the structure to see what is happening and that structure is an aspect of our interpretation. In

examining this piece, therefore, I shall be presenting a personal view and the structure which I uncover will be part of that view. Further, I need to decide what is happening before I can see what is happening, and that means making assumptions before I can get started. It also means, of course, that you (the reader) may see things differently, and so, of course, might I on another occasion. However, that we see things at all, that we find situations meaningful, is part of our ability to present form and structure. We should not feel that what I am about to show you in this chapter is, in some way, already there in the transcript, waiting to be revealed; it is much more dynamic than that. It is drawn out of the situation, but that does not mean that it was put in beforehand. The structure is in my interpretations as much as in the activities of those involved; that is how we find life meaningful, how those involved in the drama found the drama meaningful, how we produce a sensible and stable world to our view and one which we can all inhabit. So, with this in mind let us see how this section of the drama works (pp.67-78 in the transcript). It might well be worthwhile reading it through again before we begin; it will not take many minutes.

#### PREPARATION FOR THE DRAMA.

4. There was a short break between the presentation of the first climb up the mountain (see pp.59-66 in the transcript) and the drama we are to examine now, but

there was very little formal preparation. This was partly because of the 'problems of preparation' outlined earlier(4), but also because all of the drama which had gone before was, in a sense, 'preparation' in that it provided a background against which this piece could be created. Everyone, therefore, knew what was happening and could draw upon a common experience. We all knew where we were.

5. However, the teacher did make one significant point before they started. He asked the guardians to be just as obstructive as they had previously been, only to appear now to be in sympathy with the stranger and his aspirations. They had, as it were, to play a part within the drama, to confound his attempt even as they appeared to be helpful. Everyone knew how the guardians were to behave. This role, of course, had already been suggested during the 'waiting time' which we looked at a while back(5).

6. The children who were to play the guardians were able to talk together for a moment or two, though there is no record of their deliberations. There would have been time for them to outline a cursory plan (say, a father who had tried to climb and gone blind as a consequence), and time, too, to decide who should begin as guardians (Julia and Mark) and who should be brought on later as the blind father (Ian). For some reason, Peter played no part in this piece. Perhaps he did not agree with their plan.

GETTING THE DRAMA GOING.

01 Teacher. Oh, I hope we don't meet anyone else  
 02 like that again.  
 03 Julia. There are some people coming.  
 04 Mark. Oh hello.  
 05 Julia. Hello.  
 06 Teacher. Hey look. Are these more?  
 07 Shirley. (No.  
 08 Bev. (No. These are nice.  
 09 Mark. Oh have you met those (horrible people  
 10 down the bottom?  
 11 Teacher. (Are you sure?  
 12 Shirley. (Yes.  
 13 Bev. (Yes.  
 14 Mark. Oh come in.  
 15 Julia. Co..come in and sit down.  
 16 Teacher. Oh we did.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 67)

7. The teacher in role as the stranger gets the situation going at once by drawing upon their common experience,

'Oh, I hope we don't meet anyone else like that again.' (p.67: 10-12), and he sets the scene.

These opening lines are used by the participants to present one another and to point the changes that the new situation requires. They achieve this by comparing the situation with that which went before and they get involved as they draw attention to one another. They present themselves even as they present those about them. Julia does not say, for instance, 'Here come I, guardian of this mountain.....', like a character in an early morality play, but rather,

'There are some people coming.' (p.67: 03). In a few moments she will be 'seen' as she welcomes the stranger. Julia involves herself as she makes visible the situation about her and as she makes plain her point of view. This is exactly what the teacher in role as the

stranger had done immediately before,

'Oh, I hope we don't meet anyone else like that again.' (p.67: 10-12). This contribution

connects not only with their earlier experiences (and by so doing brings with it the possibility of all that has gone before), but also indicates the way in which Julia and Mark are to present themselves (and be presented) in this piece. They appreciate this, and they speak in an appropriate manner,

Mark. Oh hello.

Julia. Hello. (p.67: 04-05). Once again the teacher in role responds by drawing attention to the situation and to those involved as he links both to that which has gone before,

'Hey look. Are these more?' (p.67: 06). Now he is 'inviting' the guides to contradict him and so to present the guardians as they are now to be seen, and in contrast with those whom they met earlier. This, the guides are quite happy to do,

Shirley. (No.

Bev. (No. These are nice. (p.67: 07-08).

8. This is particularly interesting, for the guides are here presenting the guardians as they would wish to be seen by the stranger, and not as they really are (and as they were 'labelled' during the preparation). They are helping to present these guardians as sympathetic allies, whilst knowing (as, of course, the teacher in role as the stranger knows, for they were all party to that part of the preparation) that these people are 'playing a part'. The guides assist in a deception

which is against their interests in the drama. It would be a brave person who could unravel the various levels of meaning involved here, for the guides treat the guardians as the guardians would treat themselves and not as the guides would have them treated. They 'play along' to their own discomfort when they could have achieved their ends in one fell swoop by denouncing the guardians ('They're only pretending to be nice, really they are as horrible as the ones we have just left'). Had they done so, of course, they would have risked destroying the drama even before it had got going, and keeping things going seems to be a very strong motivational force and a considerable part of our concern to make experience seem 'real'(6). It is the 'conscious' concern of everyone at this early stage.

9. The teacher in role then pushes the guides a bit further, insisting that they commit themselves to the drama. He 'challenges' them to agree about the context in which they are working, and 'checks' to see that they have agreed(7),

'Are you sure?' (p.67: 11), but they know what they must do,

'Yes....Yes.' (p.67: 12-13).

10. All of this is designed to set the scene by drawing upon that which has gone before and by marking the changes. The guardians, as well, connect with their experience of life on the mountain. By implication, and through comparison, they make visible the guardians of



the previous section, and in so doing, they give substance to the presentation of themselves as 'nice',

Mark. Oh have you met those horrible people down the bottom?

Teacher. Oh we did. (p.67: 09 & 16). Now this is very clever, for it serves to give stability to that which has gone before as it is presented as a 'shared in common experience'. This palpable background then works to elaborate the characters and their relationships and to provide a sense of 'reality' in the situation they are engaged in presenting now. They draw upon the past in order to give substance to the present, and that same past is made manifest through this present presentation. As the past and the present are made visible, so are they made meaningful. We can see the reflexive force present in all 'meaning making' exchanges at work here(8).

11. But these opening lines do more than just provide a setting. They also enable those involved to know where they are and to check with one another about this. They take care to ensure that they agree about the kind of situation they are presenting. They are, as it were, establishing a point of departure. So, they tell each other what to do, and they make sure that they know what to do. Once all of this is sorted out they can fare forward in the drama.

#### THE DAZZLING PERFORMANCE.

14 Mark. Oh come in.

15 Julia. Co..come in and sit down.

(p.67)

16 Teacher. Oh we did.  
 17 Mark. You must be terribly tired.  
 18 Teacher. Well, how (extraordinary.  
 19 Julia. (What would you like to drink?  
 20 Teacher. Well...well anything that's nice and  
 21 refreshing.  
 22 Julia. Tea? (Sweet tea?  
 23 Teacher. (Tea would be lovely. I'd love  
 24 some tea.  
 25 Julia. Yes? Yes?  
 26 Mark. What are you doing?  
 27 Julia. I'll put a lot of sugar (in for you.  
 28 Teacher. (Should we tell  
 29 them, do you think? Do you think I  
 (p.68)  
 01 Teacher. ought to tell them what I'm doing?  
 02 Shirley. (Yes.  
 03 Bev. (Yes.  
 04 Teacher. Do you? (We..we're going to the top  
 05 of the mountain.  
 06 Julia. (There you are.  
 07 Teacher. To the great god.  
 08 Julia. Here are some spoons. (You must be  
 09 tired.  
 10 Mark. (You look like  
 11 our father. He went to the top.  
 12 Teacher. Really? Well, I've been told...  
 13 Mark. Shall I bring him to meet you?  
 14 Teacher. Well....in a minute or two, yes.  
 15 Mark. OK.  
 16 Teacher. I..I've been told that if I can get to  
 17 the top and see the great god then I'll  
 18 be able to join the village (down below.  
 19 Julia. (Yes, that's  
 20 right.  
 21 Teacher. And that's what I'd like to do.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 67-68)

12. I think that that this 'tea' episode is a dazzling  
 performance by Julia. She presents a subtle and many  
 layered situation in a beautiful way. Let us look at  
 what she says, and the way she uses her words. Here are  
 her words taken from the extract,

15 Co..come in and sit down. (p.67)  
 19 What would you like to drink?  
 22 Tea? Sweet tea?  
 25 Yes? Yes?  
 27 I'll put a lot of sugar in for you.  
 06 There you are. (p.68)  
 08 Here are some spoons. You must be  
 09 tired.

13. Behind her kindness and behind her welcome, we can surely feel a coercive strain. This is that robust concern which overwhelms and will not be gainsaid. She is using her care to demonstrate the power she has over her guest. It is really not difficult, with the transcript before us, to see how she manages to do this. She makes frequent use of imperatives, for instance, ('Come in', 'sit down', 'You must be tired'), and she makes assumptions about his needs ('What would you like to drink?', 'I'll put a lot of sugar in for you'). She adopts an almost interrogatory approach, forcing her 'guest' to agree with her ('Tea? Sweet tea?') and in every contribution she demonstrates a kind of benevolent impatience ('Yes? Yes?') and a cavalier disregard for his answers. It works very well and her presentation is familiar, for we have probably all been treated like this at some time.

14. It really does seem to be beautifully managed, and it surely is, but we should not be beguiled into thinking that she is deliberately working to present a situation which is, as it were, stored up in her mind. The situation (and Julia discovers this as we do) is the performance; it is built at that moment as she interacts socially with those about her. It is familiar because we have been this way before (though never quite this way) and because it reminds us of other situations, other times. It looks like a wonderful achievement, because as we read the transcript or listen to the taped

recording we imagine the situation and then we see how well she has presented it. It is easy to forget, though, that this 'imaginary' situation in our minds was conjured up by her performance. Indeed, her performance, and the situation as we perceive it and the contributions of those involved are one and the same thing. It is all rather like being amazed at how accurately a colour sample of, say, red reflects redness. We are caught in a 'reflexive trap' and there is no way out(9).

15. It is extracts like this which point to the heart of the 'meaning making' process. We can see how Julia's account is both in and about the setting it describes and we cannot escape that. It is just no good looking beyond the work done here to find some kind of absolute standard for her 'meaningfulness'. Indeed, there is no sign of the everyday experience for it has been left unattended and is not marked. We do not have to 'translate' what is done that we might find it meaningful. We simply find it so. And so though it is well done it is not amazing, as it would have been had Julia thoughtfully and deliberately worked to recreate a particular person and a particular relationship that was grounded in 'real life'. Luckily, she just got on with the business of living and making life visible, she just got on with serving the tea(10).

#### DRAMA AS A COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY.

16. Mark and Julia seem to share a kind of intuitive

perception concerning the other's actions. Again and again we can see them working together as actors in a play or as musicians following a carefully orchestrated score. They seem to be directly in touch with one another; it is as if they know what the other will say and do before they act. Here, for instance, whilst Julia is busily welcoming the stranger and putting him in his place (in both senses of that phrase), Mark is getting him to talk about his intentions and the purpose of his visit. It is as though they had different parts to play which had been written to interlock with one another. We may see, for example, how the two guardians avoid directly threatening the stranger,

04 Teacher. Do you? (We..we're going to the top  
 05 of the mountain.  
 06 Julia. (There you are.  
 07 Teacher. To the great god.  
 08 Julia. Here are some spoons. (You must be  
 09 tired.  
 10 Mark. (You look like  
 11 our father. He went to the top.  
 12 Teacher. Really? Well, I've been told...  
 13 Mark. Shall I bring him to meet you?  
 14 Teacher. Well....in a minute or two, yes.  
 15 Mark. OK.  
 16 Teacher. I..I've been told that if I can get to  
 17 the top and see the great god then I'll  
 18 be able to join the village (down below.  
 19 Julia. (Yes, that's  
 20 right.  
 21 Teacher. And that's what I'd like to do.  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 68)

17. Julia takes no notice of the stranger's highly significant remarks about going to the top and seeing the great god, but carries on serving tea and showing her concern for his tiredness. It is left to Mark to respond, and he does so in an unpredictable and oblique

fashion with no hint of a threat. He says,

'You look like our father. He went to the top.' (p.68: 10-11). Only later will the full

force of this remark be appreciated by the stranger. It is as if Julia had responsibility for presenting the comforting side of the guardians whilst Mark embarked on the process of confounding the stranger's intentions; as though Julia was busy showing them where they were while Mark got on with the business of pushing the action forward and preparing the way for the father's entry,

'Shall I bring him to meet you?' (p.68: 13).

18. I think they play this piece well. They play it together, the two guardians, and the situation seems to develop and evolve around them in a natural way. Yet we also feel that this is the way things are, as if they were following a script. It is like real life and it is like a play. It seems to be simply happening and it looks to be well managed. This is because those involved take sensitive account of the others' talk and action; they are closely attuned to one another and to the situation which their words and actions describe. They are attentive, and keenly aware of being part of a collaborative activity which is drawing them onwards. It is as if they are into something from which they cannot escape, and yet within which they feel all powerful. They are involved in the generative force(11) which reaches beyond each person's contribution and leads to new levels of understanding.

19. It is hard to explain, for whilst people involved

in creating situations in this way enjoy a sense of great confidence and power and the feeling that they may go where they like and do as they will, they are yet aware of being 'contained' by the dramatic context(12). They feel it has a dynamic quality all of its own which draws them inexorably towards some inevitable conclusion which they can neither see nor control. At times like this, all craft disappears and people work on an intuitive level. They have a sense of the 'rightness' of things, and they act and react properly. The experience is described vividly by Simon Callow as he talks of a good performance as,

A feeling of power, but not power over anyone or anything: simply energy flowing uninterrupted and unforced through your body and your mind. You are the agent. You are above the performance - it is performing, not you. You sense the audience's collective identity and you speak directly to it..[it is] not what I will do but what will happen...you are master of time and rhythm...you hear everything as if for the first time...the play is the energy: you are the direction...the text is sunk into your bones, so that it comes unbidden: it is the inevitable, the only, response to what is said to you...(13).

This is the generative force of 'living through' drama and it can be seen again and again in the work of these children. Afterwards, it is possible to see how they managed it, and that is what we are trying to do now.

20. It is interesting to see how the teacher feeds this double sense of being in control in a situation which is beyond the individual's control. The concern of the guardians, at the moment, is to show the stranger that they have his interests at heart and so they agree

with all that he says and make him feel very welcome.

It is left to the teacher in role as the stranger to demonstrate his intent and put his activities into some kind of context,

'I..I've been told that if I can get to  
the top and see the great god then I'll  
be able to join the village down below.'  
(p.68: 16-18).

In terms of the dramatic context and the roles of the guardians, this business of letting the stranger state his intentions serves to reinforce their apparently supportive nature. They avoid saying anything which could suggest an interest in what he is up to. The special significance of the stranger's words has been pointed to already as, during the tea episode, he considers with the guides whether they should tell the guardians what they are trying to do (p.67: 28 to p.68: 04). His words certainly are significant, for they also serve to demonstrate the passive role of the stranger as one who is locked into a situation from which there is no escape and within which he has little influence. He stresses what has happened to him, 'I've been told', and what will happen to him, 'I'll be able...', and he presents himself as a straw blown hither and thither by the winds of experience. He gives himself as one to be worked upon, and though the guardians do not appear to press him to forbear,

Julia. Yes, that's right.

Teacher. And that's what I'd like to do.

(p.68: 19-21), they are

already, as we have just seen, working towards their own



ends, gaining his confidence (and their own) and preparing the way for their father. He puts them in touch with the power they enjoy, and in touch with the boundaries of that power which are described by the developing context.

DELAYING THE PROGRESS OF THE DRAMA.

21. We can see, within this extract, an example of the teacher working through the dramatic context to achieve an educational goal. Mark is eager to move the action forward, but the teacher is concerned to delay things for a bit so that they may consider more closely the kind of situation they are in, and the implications which it may have for them. It is not difficult to achieve this 'delaying' from within the drama;

Mark. Shall I bring him to meet you?

Teacher. Well....in a minute or two, yes.

Mark. OK. (p.68: 13-15), and it is interesting

to see the value of such a tactic. We might remember the 'waiting time' which preceeded the climb up the mountain(14), and consider the way in which that worked and the way it gave to those involved a chance to reflect upon their situation from within the drama. Without this kind of check, the drama is likely to skip along on plot and narrative alone and much of the significance of being involved in a way of life may be missed. By holding them back, though, the teacher can get the children not only to look at their position but also to consolidate the dramatic context as they do so. The next seventy lines of the transcript may help us to

see how much the teacher gains by delaying the action in  
this manner.

(p.68)

22 Julia. Our father tried twice.  
23 Teacher. Really?  
24 Julia. Yes.  
25 Teacher. Well, I've had a terrible time. Did you  
26 have to come thr...did he have to come  
27 through those awful people just down  
28 below?  
29 Mark. (Yes.

(p.69)

01 Julia. (He..he came up from the other side.  
02 But he still met them.  
03 Mark. Yes.  
04 Teacher. Did he?  
05 Julia. Yeah.  
06 Teacher. I'm very concerned because my two..  
07 guides he..I wouldn't be here if it  
08 wasn't for them. I mean they've got  
09 me through everything but/  
10 Julia. Are they from the little village down  
11 at the bottom?  
12 Teacher. That's right. Only they think that I'm  
13 going to have to go past those people  
14 on the way down and I'm really scared  
15 about this.  
16 Mark. Yes, and there's no other route down.  
17 Teacher. Isn't there?  
18 Julia. What about down through that hole where  
19 the devil came out?  
20 Mark. Oh no...that's very, very dangerous,  
21 that.  
22 Julia. I know.  
23 Mark. Too far down.  
24 Teacher. It doesn't sound very nice, does it?  
25 Julia. It's very slippery/  
26 Mark. Yeah.  
27 Julia. But I'm sure they could get down to the  
28 water's edge.  
29 Teacher. Do you...em..?

(p.70)

01 Mark. You might be a bit (big.  
02 Julia. (There's sand at the  
03 bottom.  
04 Shirley. We'll get lost. We've never been there.  
05 Mark. Yes, I don't think/  
06 Julia. You could take them.  
07 Mark. Well...I've got some more gardening.  
08 Julia. Oh.  
09 Teacher. Do you have a garden up here?  
10 Julia. (Yes.  
11 Mark. (Yes.  
12 Teacher. Gosh. Do you have...(do you have any

13 problems/  
 14 Julia. (Do you want to  
 15 see it?  
 16 Teacher. with these? What do you call those  
 17 horrible people down there? I don't  
 18 like them.  
 19 Mark. Oh we don't/  
 20 Julia. Well, we're not very fond of them  
 21 either.  
 22 Teacher. But do they cause you any bother or  
 23 anything..or give you any trouble?  
 24 Julia. No.  
 25 Mark. Yes...once some of them come along..  
 26 came along and picked a load of our  
 27 flowers out of the garden.  
 28 Teacher. Really?  
 29 Julia. I'll go and see if father can come  
 (p.71)  
 01 Julia. along. You stay and talk to your friends.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 68-71)

22. Julia takes immediate advantage of this 'delaying time' as she dwells upon her father and hints that all may not be well for, he 'tried twice'. It is not a very obvious hint and it may well be missed, but it is there and it may be seen as part of a pattern when we come to look back over the transcript. It is part of a situation which makes sense, and it makes sense because of contributions like this. Neither is it wasted upon the stranger,

'Really?' (p.68: 23), though it takes him a little time to connect it with his earlier experiences and by so doing make it significant,

'Did you have to come thr...did he have to come through those awful people just down below?' (p.68: 25-28). It is nice, as it is

ironic, that he looks to this father for comfort, as one who has shared with him in adversity and who, like him, went before. Here, as the stranger, he is playing into the guardians' hands; they are working together to begin

the business of creating a symbol out of the old man. It is a co-operative activity, and a collaborative enterprise, and they put the drama before their individual concerns as characters within that drama. Or rather, they appreciate that their characters depend upon the dramatic context which has to be preserved at all costs.

COPING WITH THREATS.

23. There comes now, another of those threats to the drama which left unrepaired will destroy the sense of stability which they are concerned to create, and which must be created if their activities are to be meaningful (15). Here is what happens. The teacher in role as the stranger asks if the father had to come through 'those awful people', and Mark and Julia reply together, but in apparently contradictory ways. So, whilst Mark says, 'Yes', Julia says,

'He..he came up from the other side.' (p.69: 01), and in speaking in this way, she implies that he would have missed them. Immediately, though, she works to account for this contradiction by saying,

'But he still met them.' (p.69: 02). The others help as well; Mark confirms that what she says is correct, even though it seemed at first to deny what he had said, and the stranger by acknowledging her account shows it to be acceptable,

Julia. But he still met them.  
Mark. Yes.  
Teacher. Did he?

Julia. Yeah. (p.69: 02-05). It is interesting to think that those involved were probably unaware of the work which had to be done in order to preserve the sense of facticity. Indeed, as we have seen, it is only by examining the transcript that 'mistakes' of this sort can be uncovered(16).

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHER IN THE DRAMA.

24. This might be a good opportunity to see how the teacher manages to influence the kind of contribution he wants from the children. We have seen him attending to the guardians and helping them to work properly, but we should not forget the guides who, up to now, have played a very small part in this section of the drama. This is not just the way things happen to be but a state of affairs which had to be brought about. In the previous piece, the guardians had been used as little more than a device, introduced as a catalyst by which the stranger and the guides might examine the strength of their convictions. Now, though, the guardians are rapidly developing as characters (think only of Julia's 'tea' episode), and the teacher seems concerned to encourage this. However, it is not so easy to see how the teacher manages to keep Shirley and Beverley quiet without telling them to be quiet. It is not enough to want the action to centre on the guardians, the teacher also has to make sure that it does.

Of course, the initial preparation for the scene and the demands which the teacher put upon the guardians

to present themselves as 'nice people' would not have been missed by the others, and we have already seen how they were prepared to present the guardians 'properly' even though it was against their interests as guides to do so(17). Already, then, they will have seen themselves as 'tools' in the drama, and there to support the guardians in their task. It is not surprising, either, that they should not be over demonstrative in pleading the guardians' cause or that they should find no opportunity to attack them whilst helping to present them as being supportive. However, as we have seen, it is not sufficient simply to 'set people going'(18) and it ought to be possible to uncover some of the ways by which the teacher manages to keep the guides away from the centre of things. After all, Shirley has shown little reluctance in coming forward until now.

26. It is certain that the teacher takes care to converse with Mark and Julia. By drawing upon his 'rights' as a teacher and letting them work in the drama he is able to select the next speaker(19), and by responding quickly to the guardians' contributions he can effectively 'squeeze out' the guides. He puts them into a position whereby they must interrupt if they are to take part. They try to do this on several occasions (and maybe more often than is recoverable from the transcript) but usually, without much success(20). In effect, they are not invited to speak. The teacher is drawing upon his extra 'rights' as a teacher and letting

them work within the drama of strangers, guides and guardians(21). He is keeping the guides quiet through the structure of the conversation. However, they are not absent from the drama, and when he wants them, when he selects them, they are there;

Teacher. What do you think? Do you think we ought to go on?

Bev. Yes. (p.74: 03-05). Except for the unsuccessful attempts mentioned above, Beverley had made no verbal contribution for six pages of dialogue, yet the teacher in role could draw her in just as easily as he could keep her out, for she had ever been a part of the situation. He has only to make sure that his 'instructions' work properly as contributions to the dramatic context, and that his actions are not inappropriate on that level. She is helped to keep in touch, as well, by their physical involvement with one another (as they stand in relationship, one to the other) and as she is part of a group seen to be presenting experience dramatically. This active involvement helps to keep the guides attentive.

27. Further, as one reads the transcript one gets a sense of that physical relationship between the various characters. The teacher in role as the stranger may well have been between the guides and guardians, facing the latter and so denying the guides access to the verbal exchange by his gaze and bearing. Of course, the transcript cannot be explicit and my memory does not serve me well in this regard, but it still remains the

case that such aspects of the physical context may be described by attending to the way in which those involved contribute; to the way in which they speak, and do not speak. It is just part of the business of providing a context within which contributions may make sense. The flow of conversation indicates, and draws our attention to, aspects of the physical environment which, in turn, help us to make sense of that conversation.

28. Yet another way in which the guides' contributions are managed may be seen if we look at how the stranger and the guardians talk about them. The stranger is here talking of his fears to the guardians;

Teacher. I'm very concerned because my two.. guides he..I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them. I mean they've got me through everything but/

Julia. Are they from the little village down at the bottom?

Teacher. That's right. Only they think that I'm going to have to go past those people on the way down and I'm really scared about this. (p.69: 06-15). They talk

about the guides and they do not invite the guides to speak for themselves. In fact, they talk about them as though they were not there and in so doing they indicate very forcibly that they are not expected to speak. In effect, they devalue the guides by 'disabling' them and talking on their behalf. The teacher sets it going and the guardians take up the form of his words. By such means does the teacher realise his concerns within the dramatic context, and by such means does he keep the guides in place and show them, through the drama, what



is required of them. We should not think that only those who speak are taking part, for all are involved and all have to be kept in place.

OF DIFFERENT LAYERS OF MEANING.

29. We may now appreciate how this 'delaying time' pays off, for the teacher in role encourages the others to consider his position as he recounts his experiences and dwells upon the future and the problems it might hold for him. He concludes, as we have seen,

'...and I'm really scared about this.' (p.69: 14-15). Julia and Mark, of course, are concerned to show him how they understand and appreciate his predicament,

'Yes, and there's no other route down.' (p.69: 16). But they can do more for him, and they are anxious to show the stranger that they have his interests at heart,

'What about down through that hole where the devil came out?' (p.69: 18-19). This is a marvellous line and it makes a rich contribution, for it tells us everything about these guardians who give only to take away. They offer him help and guidance, but there is a sting in the tail; a price to be paid. They show him a way of escape, but it must be through 'that hole where the devil came out'. Indeed, this is the beginning of another fine example of the way in which the two guardians work together to confound the stranger and his intentions whilst yet appearing to have his interests at heart. They begin to disagree amongst themselves, and the cause of their disagreement is

presented as their concern for the stranger. So, a promise is held out, but only so that it may be withdrawn;

Julia. What about down through that hole where the devil came out?

Mark. Oh no...that's very, very dangerous, that.

Julia. I know.

Mark. Too far down.

Teacher. It doesn't sound very nice, does it?

Julia. It's very slippery/

Mark. Yeah. (p.69: 18-26). It is a

real shame, they want to help but, well it would not be fair to send him down there. After all, it is 'very dangerous' and 'slippy'.

'But I'm sure they could get down to the water's edge.' (p.69: 27-28), says Julia, and

by now they are playing with him, dangling him over the hole where the devil came out. Mark then looks at the stranger and talks out of his concern for his safety,

'You might be a bit big.' (p.70: 01), but Julia is there to put his mind at rest again,

'There's sand at the bottom' (p.70: 02). At this point Shirley interrupts, and succeeds in getting their attention because she connects with the situation as it is being played. She does not intend to have the stranger slip away like that,

'We'll get lost. We've never been there.' (p.70: 04) and Mark is ready to agree with the guide who has the stranger's interests ever in mind,

'Yes, I don't think/' (p.70: 05).

Julia, though, is enjoying this and now decides to put Mark on the spot as she shows her interest in the

stranger's welfare(22),

'You could take them.' (p.70: 06). It might not be too easy for poor Mark to demonstrate his concern for their guest and yet refuse to take him down, but he has to respond and he has to respond within the drama. His excuse is rather lame (and, therefore, helps to show us what he is up to), but who could mistrust a person with 'some more gardening' to do (p.70: 07)?

30. It is all very strange, and it works on many different levels. That which appears to be in the stranger's interests (a safe journey to the bottom of the mountain) is really against them as he is concerned to get to the top. It seems that the dangers will be there whether he goes down now or after his visit to the great god, but this is lost in the opportunity they hold out for a quick escape. It would suit the guardians very well if the stranger were to go down to the water's edge, but they cannot let him know they feel this way. In fact, in spite of the difficulties they seem to put before him, the stranger finds their offer tempting. It is tempting because it appears to be presented out of their concern for his safety. It is this which they are arguing about and Mark's lack of enthusiasm for the hole with the sandy bottom is seen as part of his interest in the stranger's welfare. From every point of view, the guardians seem to have his interests in mind, and it is only poor Shirley who is made to seem self-seeking,

'We'll get lost. We've never been there.'  
(p.70: 04). The

guardians manage to be both for his going and for his not going, and in this way they seem disinterested and appear not to be concerned to manipulate events. They achieve this position by playing upon his fear of 'those horrible people down there'(p.70: 17) and, with the stranger, they present those guardians of the previous section even as they consider the best way of avoiding them. They keep the threat they pose before us and before the stranger, and by keeping them and the consequences of their presence on the mountain ever in our minds, they can concentrate upon showing their own 'concern' for the stranger and his safe passage.

31. These two guardians know how to be kind in order to be cruel. First they give, and then they take away. We might be reminded of Petruchio in 'The Taming of the Shrew', who would have nothing but the best for Kate and so made sure that she got nothing at all. They give and then they take away. They demonstrate their concern for the stranger in their giving, and they do so again in their taking away. It is well done.

'REHEARSAL NOTES'.

32. Let us see what happens next, and imagine you are listening to a director talking to his cast about a play they are to perform. Is it not like looking at a play?

"Now that the stranger knows about the garden, he can make use of it to encourage the others (and the audience) to think about the situation they have helped to create and also give the guardians the opportunity to demonstrate their concern for him and his predicament. They can strengthen the trust which he has in them by showing themselves to be victims of 'those horrible people down there',

who once 'came along and picked a load of our flowers.'(p.70: 26-27). The stranger is able to identify with these people who have been similarly offended. They seem to share with him in adversity, and the spoiled garden becomes an image of the guardians and their troubles. It is something to which the stranger can look and find strength. They offer comfort; and the closer the stranger can come to them now, the more effective will it be when he eventually discovers the truth about his condition."

33. It is possible to talk quite objectively about these people, as though they existed as characters in a play. Yet I was one of them and I did not feel as if I was in a play. I just took part, and that is not at all the same as taking a part. Neither, for those involved in this drama is it a question of playing along in some game as though they were partners in a subterfuge. It is not just taking part in some pretend activity. Of course, on one level they are doing this, and if you were to ask them when the drama was finished they would surely agree that they had been pretending. But still, the stranger does not feel he is playing a part and neither do the guardians (except in so far as they are pretending to be kind and welcoming). Furthermore, the stranger does feel comforted, he does warm to them and he is encouraged by the concern they show for him; I was encouraged by the concern they seemed to show for me.

34. All of this might seem very strange, silly even. It is as if we both know and do not know, as if we could be teachers and strangers at the same time. However, it is probably just part of the business of making life meaningful as we focus attention on those aspects of

experience which are of immediate concern. We are only aware of that to which our attention is drawn and it is quite possible to work within the drama and see nothing of the preparation which went before. The everyday world of teachers and pupils, the world in which instructions for the drama are given, is not here presented. For the time being, and for these people it has no significance. One word would be enough, though, to represent that world, a single action even, but for the moment no one is speaking about it. It is quite possible for the stranger to know what the guardians are up to and yet feel comforted by the manner in which they are treating him. I know it, for I was there.

MORE THREATS.

35. In the midst of this piece comes another of the 'drama threatening' contradictions which have to be dealt with if the situation is to retain its stability and meaningfulness.

Teacher. But do they cause you any bother or anything..or give you any trouble?

Julia. No.

Mark. Yes...once some of them come along.. came along and picked a load of our flowers out of the garden.

Teacher. Really?

Julia. I'll go and see if father can come along. You stay and talk with your friends. (p.70: 22, to p.71: 01).

36. When the stranger asked the guardians if the people below had given them any bother, the two guardians responded almost together,

Julia. No.

Mark. Yes. (p.70: 24-25). For a moment they

stare into the abyss. But it is only for a moment, for Mark moves onward almost without pause,

'...once some of them come along..  
came along and picked a load of our  
flowers...' (p.70: 25-27). He means, as a general

rule we do not have any trouble, but yes, on one occasion and with some of those people, we did. They are all safely on their way again,

'Really?' (p.70: 28), says the stranger as if to give emphasis to that one exceptional occasion. It is all a part of the 'repair work' which has to be done, and acts as an indicator to the others that Mark's contribution makes sense. In this manner the points of view of Julia and Mark are made into accurate accounts of a situation even though they appeared at first to be contradictory. The work here, though, was not quite so smoothly done as on some of those occasions at which we have looked before(23). Apart from the almost imperceptible pause before Mark went on to say, 'once....', he got, as well, into a grammatical muddle; he used the present tense, 'come', and so found that he had to start again. This little difficulty seems to be more than just coincidental. Indeed, it was this that alerted me to what was going on(24).

#### BRINGING THE DELAYING TIME TO A CLOSE.

37. The others probably noticed Mark's uncertainty as well, and it is not surprising that Julia chooses this moment to re-establish the situation as it was before the action was delayed by the teacher. In a clear,

precise statement which is unambiguous and commanding, she indicates most forcefully where they are and that which is about to happen,

'I'll go and see if father can come along. You stay and talk to your friends.' (p.70: 29 to p.71: 01). This kind of

deliberate account of a situation seems to follow quite regularly upon any threat to meaningfulness that may have occurred. A similar sort of statement, for instance, followed the muddle over whether the father had met the guardians on his way up(25). It is as if those involved over elaborate a situation in order to compensate for the threat. So, Julia acts, and as she acts she tells us what she is doing and she also tells the others exactly what they must do. She stays in role, but her instructions are clear and precise, and no one should be in any doubt as to what is expected of them. Julia can work in this way, of course, because she has the character within the dramatic context to organise and manage events, a character which was established in the tea serving piece. It would not have been so easy for the teacher to work through his role as the stranger like this, and there is little that he can do to prolong the delaying time now that she has decided it is time to get the father. As we have seen, pedagogical concerns have to be realised in terms of the dramatic context, and he would need to be very inventive indeed to obstruct successfully his hostess's intentions.



38. The teacher's influence in the drama is always constrained by the context, but he was probably quite happy to move on at this point for the delaying time had been worthwhile, as we may see if we look back and see what happened. We should also be able to appreciate that, whilst the teacher cannot always foresee the outcome of such delays, the opportunity to pause and consider what is happening within the drama is likely to bring rewards. I would not want to call this reflection but it is not hard to imagine what a more sensitive and experienced teacher might have done with this time.

#### THE PRESENTATION OF THE FATHER.

39. Let us now turn our attention to the presentation of the blind father.

29 Julia. I'll go and see if father can come (p.70)  
 01 Julia. along. You stay and talk to your friends. (p.71)  
 02 Teacher. Where are they going to?  
 03 Shirley. They're going to see.....to get his  
 04 father.  
 05 Teacher. Are they? Don't they seem nice?  
 06 Mark. She's going to have to guide him  
 07 (because he's blind.  
 08 Teacher. (They seem really nice people.  
 09 Shirley. He's blind.  
 10 Teacher. He must be very old, I expect. If he's  
 11 blind now/  
 12 Mark. He's not that old.  
 13 Teacher. Isn't he? (Oh  
 14 Mark. (No. He didn't/  
 15 Bev. Well why is he blind?  
 16 Mark. didn't do the trip that long ago. Ah,  
 17 here he is now. Come on..careful...  
 18 over here..come on.  
 19 Teacher. I don't like the look of this (at/  
 20 Julia. (Mind the  
 21 steps.  
 22 Teacher. Oh dear. Poor fellow..he doesn't look  
 23 (very nice.  
 24 Mark. (Careful..careful down.

25 Julia. One more. There you are. We'll  
 26 (get you a seat.  
 27 Mark. (\*\*\*\*\* a few days ago. He's made it  
 28 now, as you can see.  
 29 Julia. There you are. Sit down on there.  
 (p.72)  
 01 Teacher. He doesn't look very nice.  
 02 Mark. Sit down. Right...he made it here.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 70-72)

40. The presentation of the blind man is a fine example of a person being 'put in place' by those about him. I consider it to be instructive, for it has implications for the way in which we are treated and seen as people. In order to appreciate how this is done, we have to go back in the transcript to the point at which Mark first mentions the father and prepares the way for his coming. The father does not just arrive, but is made a part of the situation before he arrives. He is drawn into the action, his arrival is made meaningful; it is looked for. Let us remind ourselves of what Mark says, and see how it makes sense even as it elaborates the situation they are presenting,

'You look like our father. He went  
 to the top.' (p.68: 10-11).

41. This contribution works in several ways. It works to identify the stranger with the father, and it does so on two distinct levels. There is a correspondence of appearance, 'You look like our father', and there is a correspondence of intent, 'He went to the top'. The old man is given significance as he is linked with the developing context through his natural (though still managed) relationship with the guardians and the contrived relationship with the stranger. He does not

just arrive, but is looked for in terms of the situation they are creating (a stranger wanting to climb the mountain). However, whilst this statement tells us about the stranger and the context of which he is a part, it also serves to present the father as 'being like the stranger'. The two are aspects of the same occasion and their identity is bound up with one another.

42. Mark then says,

'Shall I bring him to meet you?' (p.68: 13). Now this is not just a question about the suitability of a meeting between the two, nor simply a contribution designed to move the action forward, for it serves, as well, to elaborate the context and put those involved securely in their places. For example, we 'see' the stranger as a stranger in the way in which he is treated and presented by Mark. He is a visitor drinking his hosts' tea and he is given to us in that way through the manner of Mark's speaking,

'Shall I bring him to meet you?' (p.68: 13). We see the stranger as he stands passively, as he is not in a position to organise events for himself and as he must wait to be treated courteously,

'Shall I bring him to meet you?' (p.68: 13). At the same time, of course, these same words serve to put Mark in his place as an organiser. It is Mark who is seen to be initiating the exchange, and he is the one in a position to make things happen. He is the host, 'at

home', and he demonstrates this as he points to the stranger's strangeness through his words. Finally, the father is also presented and put in place by this contribution. He is not presented specifically as being disabled, but already there are signs that he bears some kind of impediment to his will,

'Shall I bring him to meet you?' (p.68: 13). These words tell of someone who must be brought, even in his own house. Such an introduction does not tell us that he is blind or deaf, or even that he is disabled, but it is compatible with our realisation, later, that he is so troubled. It is appropriate in a way that, say, 'Shall I call him?', might not have been. It is small details like this, small suggestions and hints which will not be understood as we can understand them in an analysis of this kind, but which still provide a sense of structure and a feeling of stability. No one is likely to say, 'Hey, just a minute; what do you mean, "Shall I bring him"?', but it is out of such contributions that situations are made meaningful. It 'indicates' relationships but, at the same time and reflexively, it makes sense only as those relationships are appreciated. We know what we mean and then we can find out how we know what we mean. It is in this way that we can talk of words and actions as being both in and about the situations they serve to make visible.

43. At the close of the delaying period, Julia again works for the advent of the blind man,

'I'll go and see if father can come along.

You stay and talk with your friends.'

(p.70: 29 to p.71: 01).

In describing what is going to happen, she is also helping to make the situation visible. We have already seen how this contribution may have been motivated by concerns beyond the drama(26), but it is, still, quite clearly rooted in the dramatic context and it makes very good sense in terms of that context. Once again, we may see how her choice of words places her in an active, organising role whilst, at the same time, describing the relationship between herself and Mark ('I'll see if father can come') and also between Mark and the others ('your friends'). Her contribution also elaborates the situation on different levels: 'we're nice people' (your friends with whom you can stay and talk) and 'we're out to stop you' (and will do so as we present our father). In fact, contributions of this kind seem to slice through many layers of meaning and may be taken on many different levels. For instance, there is Julia busily rebuilding the drama and setting it on course again; there is the hostess doing her duty and making the stranger feel welcome; there is the daughter-in-law going to get her father; there is the guardian of the mountain about the business of preventing the climb, and there are probably several more. All of these things come together in this contribution and you may take her how you will according to your interest. I do not think we could say that one of these 'meanings' is more real

than another for they each have to be managed and appreciated; they each have to be produced. Of course, we may present one level as real and the others as only make-believe but that is another matter and no part of the work done to make them meaningful(27).

44. Then, of course, and beyond all of this she is also contributing to the presentation of the father(28),

'I'll go and see if father can come.' (p.70: 29). In doing so, she clearly points to some kind of problem which may prevent him from coming. Once again, she does not tell us that he is blind (perhaps he simply does not like meeting people, perhaps he is very busy or unwell), but what she says is consistent with him being blind and, for the moment, we can only wait for more information. The point is, that we may be alarmed by his appearance when he comes, and we may be surprised, but we cannot hold up our hands and say, 'How can this be? How can he be blind and deaf?'. We cannot do this because when Julia says, 'I'll see if father can come' and when Mark says, 'Shall I bring him to meet you?', they speak of the blind man and his condition in an appropriate way. Of course, our knowledge of the situation (as people who have read the transcript) enables us to make sense of these contributions and treat the guardians' words as indicators to the father's disability. That is because we can treat this drama as though it were a play with the ending already contained in its beginning. But still, these are the words that

were spoken and they are a part of the 'texture' of the exchange, and they bear this kind of information for those who know enough to understand what is going on. As we hear them for the first time (taking part in the drama, listening to the tape or reading the transcript), we may only be aware that the father has to brought or encouraged to come(29). We may even miss altogether the significance of the phrasing which points to the father's passive role and hear it only as, 'I'll go and tell father you're here', or simply, 'Father! There's someone down here you should come and meet'. However, because we (or some of us) missed something of what was going on does not mean that it was not going on. Mark and Julia knew exactly what they were saying and surely they noticed how the other spoke, and there may be those in the drama (or watching or reading) who also caught something of the significance of these words. It all points to the importance of interpretation in the making of meaning, and to the manner and focus of our attention. It should encourage us to look for the ways in which meanings are made rather than treat them as if they were simply passed on, like tasty recipes or unwelcome presents. It should help us to see that our sense of a stable world and our feeling that experience is meaningful comes of appropriate (explicable) contributions. These may be in the form of the merest hints ('I'll see if.....' and 'Shall I bring...') or they may be of the kind that will make the blind father

significant even before he comes ('You look like our father. He went to the top.'). The business of making contributions explicable, the business of connecting them with the context in which they are uttered (even when they appear to be arbitrary or contradictory) is the business of making life visible(30). It is the way in which we provide a sense of structure, the way in which we find things to be meaningful. We have to say, these were the words that were used, and if it is only with hindsight that we who heard them can come to appreciate other levels of significance, well then so be it. We still have to accept the sensitivity of Julia and Mark who spoke in a way that rewards such close examination.

CONTRIBUTIONS ELABORATE THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT.

45. It is interesting to see what happens when Julia says, 'I'll go and see if father can come', because both guardians turn to go. Then comes this little piece,

Teacher. Where are they going to?  
 Shirley. They're going to see.....to  
                   get his father. (p.71: 02-04). We know

what these lines mean even if we cannot see what is going on, but how do we know how to take them? How do we know what they mean?

46. We know what they mean because they indicate a context within which we can take their meaning. We know what they mean because they present the situation within which they are uttered. They put people in their place and they mark out relationships. When this is done we can understand what they mean. So,



'Where are they going to?', describes that which is going on and those aspects of the situation to which we should attend, and focus upon, if we are to understand what is being said. Then,

'They're going to see.....to get his father.', draws our attention to the developing situation (both guardians going, then Mark pausing and leaving it to Julia to collect the blind father). Shirley manages to cope easily with the alterations in the setting as they occur, by her use of words and the 'awkwardness' of her construction. She helps us to see what is happening as it happens. Her words account for the changes even as they make them visible and meaningful(31). She also, you will appreciate, follows the example of Julia and Mark and presents the father as needing to be brought.

47. However, whilst the words show us what is taking place, they also present the people involved and serve to keep them before us. We can see the stranger as he looks to the guide for information and so puts her in place as well. We see the guide as she responds to his request as 'one who knows' and by doing so makes it plain where they both stand. The stranger points to the guardians and the way in which they are presented as he talks of 'they', and the guide, as we have seen, indicates the nature of their relationship (showing Julia now to be in charge) as she accounts for what is going on,

'They're going to see.....to

get his father.' (p.71: 03-04). All the while, of course, we see the active guardians at home on their mountain, the guides who can only comment upon what is happening, the stranger who has to seek for information and the passive father, ('They're going to see [if]...', and '[They're going] to get his father.'). This is how contributions connect with the situations which they describe and through which they appear to be meaningful.

#### HIATUS.

48. Whilst Julia goes to get the father (who could have been produced immediately, for he is just waiting there) another short 'gap' is created. This pause is presented and used as those who are left discuss what Julia is doing and then focus upon the father's blindness. It is yet another example of preparing the way for his entry and making his coming meaningful. It is also an opportunity to make sure that everyone knows what is about to happen so that they will be able to contribute properly and help to bring out the old man's significance within the drama. They all work (even the guides, even Julia and Ian, who do not come on when they could so easily have come on) to bring out the implications of the father's blindness.

49. At first the teacher in role as the stranger 'refuses to see' what they are saying and so encourages them to spell it out,

Shirley. They're going to see.....to get his father.

Teacher. Are they? Don't they seem nice?

Mark. She's going to have to guide him  
because he's blind. (p.71: 03-07). But  
still the stranger does not see what is happening,

'They seem really nice people.' (p.71: 08), and so  
gets Shirley to work on behalf of the guardians, and  
against her own interests, in the greater interest of  
stability and sense in the drama. She says,

'He's blind.' (p.71: 09). Even now, though, the  
stranger 'refuses' to take the point of this blindness.  
He manages to 'distance' the father and his condition,  
so that it does not touch him too closely. He achieves  
this as he accounts for the father's blindness,

'He must be very old, I expect. If he's  
blind now/' (p.71: 10-11). As Beverley says, a  
little later,

'You are young.' (p.75: 03), and so the old man's  
disability cannot touch him too nearly. Of course, by  
being deliberately obtuse in this way, the teacher can,  
through his role in the drama, 'challenge' the others to  
present the situation more vividly, and this they do.  
This stubborn refusal by the stranger to face up to the  
situation is too much for Mark for he is determined to  
make him appreciate the significance of the father's  
blindness. He interrupts the teacher in role to tell  
him he is missing the point,

'He's not that old.' (p.71: 12), and succeeds in  
forcing him out of his comfortable corner,

'Isn't he? Oh.' (p.71: 13).

50. Drama of this kind, and the making of meaning in

any circumstances goes beyond individual concerns to the establishment of sensible situations in which different points of view may come together. The presentation of the guardians' threat behind their 'pleasant seeming' is the work of all involved in this drama, and every contribution is a part of that presentation(32). They all know what they are about in this careful, precise 'game' through which they play with the notion of his blindness and the significance it brings. It is all very delicate, and it is created by hints and suggestions so that when Beverley (who has said nothing for some time, and may have been nodding) interrupts and threatens to destroy all that they are doing by demanding a clear cut answer,

'Well why is he blind?' (p.71: 15), her contribution is discounted and remains unmarked(33). She is not speaking in the right way and so they deal with her inappropriate contribution by ignoring it. It is not left in the air but devalued; her words are treated as words which were never uttered. A little later the same thing happens again as Beverley seeks a firm 'reality' upon which she can count,

'Why did he try it again, though?' (p.72: 15). These contributions are not acceptable and so they are not accepted. Things have to be done properly, and if they are not then, as Ian discovered to his cost, contributions are likely to be discounted(34).

AT LAST, THE ENTRY OF THE FATHER.

51. By now everything is ready for the presentation of the blind man, and this the guardians do as they lead Ian into the room. Let us look at what they say as they bring him in;

Mark. Ah, here he is now. Come on..careful...  
over here..come on.  
Julia. Mind the steps.  
Mark. Careful..careful down.  
Julia. One more. There you are. We'll get  
you a seat.  
Mark. He's made it now, as you can see.  
Julia. There you are. Sit down on there.  
Mark. Sit down. Right...he made it here.  
(p.71: 16 to p.72: 02)

52. From the moment when Mark says,

'Ah, here he is now.', and speaks as if he were not there, to when he says,

'...he made it here.', as though he were not altogether there and could not speak for himself, they concentrate upon the task of presenting Ian as a blind person, presenting him as inadequate. The blind man appears to be blind as they treat him as blind. It is not enough to say, as Shirley said a little earlier, 'He's blind'(p.71: 09), and leave it at that, for his blindness has to be continuously presented if it is to keep its significance and be a part of the context. He is disabled as they treat him as disabled. Of course, a blind man is blind, but he is, as well, other people's perceptions of his blindness. They respond to his blindness, and in so doing, show him what it means to be blind. He is a blind man in a social world where his blindness has significance and consequences. It is not

simply that he cannot see, like some eyeless fish lurking at the bottom of the ocean, for there is more to his blindness than a lack of sight; much more. It has implications for the way in which he lives and is treated. People demand of the blind man a particular kind of response, and so does he of them. Their demands are to be found in the way in which they treat each other. We can see it happening here as the guardians go about the business of putting the blind man in his place, but it happens just as surely in the everyday world as well(35). We create people as disabled as we treat and present them as disabled, and so do we create those about us whom we care to treat as normal. That is why this example is so important, and whenever we consider the business of putting people in their place, we should think of this blind man and what had to be done that we might manage to see him(36).

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLIND MAN IN THE DRAMA.

53. Even as the guardians treat the blind man as blind, they point to the kind of people they would wish to be; people who treat others with consideration. In this way did they treat the stranger who was welcomed into their home, and now the stranger and the blind man come together. They can continue the work begun by Mark when he linked the stranger with the father. Consider, for instance, the way in which Julia treated her 'guest' in the tea drinking piece and the way in which she treats the old man now. Think of how they worked to

give the stranger 'good' advice, and then see how the stranger and the blind father come together as they are presented by these guardians as in need of help and guidance. The guardians show in their presentation that they know what is best for them. Now that they are together and side by side, everyone can work to bring out the significance the blind man has for the stranger, who by now is visibly worried,

I don't like the look of this at/  
 Oh dear. Poor fellow..he doesn't look  
 very nice.  
 He doesn't look very nice.

(p.71: 19 to p.72: 01). These

are strange ways to talk about anyone. His words are in poor taste. These are the thoughts we should keep to ourselves and never speak out loud. They work within the drama that we may see how profound is the effect that the presentation of the blind man has had upon the stranger. However, they work on another level as well. They work as a kind of 'theatrical convention', as an 'aside' to an audience, which may be overheard by the guardians but not marked(37). On this level, these contributions help alert us to the symbolic nature of the blind man and the purpose of his place in the drama. The guardians are using him as a device, as a symbol, as a warning even, and the stranger demonstrates the blind father's significance upon this level as he speaks his thoughts and shows the kind of impression the presentation has had upon him. It is because his words sound strange (in bad taste maybe, but not

inappropriate) that our attention is drawn to this extra significance. We are all told to look how the drama is working, and we can hear the teacher behind the stranger helping us to see.

54. However, though the stranger may have been made uneasy by the vivid way in which they have shown him their father's blindness, they have yet to get him to appreciate fully the nature of this blindness and the implications that it has for him. Mark went some way towards achieving this a little earlier(38), but there is still more to be done.

We need now to move on in the transcript.

02 Mark. Sit down. Right...he made it here.  
 03 Teacher. Hello.  
 04 Julia. He got/  
 05 Ian. (Hello.  
 06 Mark. (He slipped down. I'll get him/  
 07 Teacher. What thing?  
 08 Julia. When he first tried it.  
 09 Mark. I have to put this in his ear.  
 10 Teacher. Tried what?  
 11 Julia. (Coming up the mountain.  
 12 Mark. (Because he's...(he's very deaf.  
 13 Julia. (He went up a second  
 14 time, blind.  
 15 Bev. Why did he try it again, though?  
 16 Mark. He's very deaf. You'll have to talk  
 17 through....  
 18 Teacher. What you mean the..he..he tried to  
 19 get up the mountain like I am?  
 20 Mark. (Yeah.  
 21 Julia. (Yes.  
 22 Teacher. And this happened to him?  
 23 Mark. Yes.  
 24 Julia. Oh yes...  
 (Extract from the transcript, page 72)

55. In order to see how they manage to get the teacher in role as the stranger to appreciate the significance of the blind man we should look at the way the guardians run two conversations side by side in this extract. It



is quite cleverly done. They use one of these conversations to show the stranger how the father became blind, so that he might understand it was not just a question of old age. This seems to be Julia's task,

04 Julia. He got/  
 08 Julia. When he first tried it.  
 11 Julia. Coming up the mountain.  
 13 Julia. He went up a second  
 14 time, blind.  
 21 Julia. Yes.  
 24 Julia. Oh yes... (p.72: 04-24). Whilst Julia

is explaining how the old man came to be blind through his journey up the mountain, Mark is drawing attention to the blind man's deafness. It is not simply that he cannot hear very well but that he must carry with him a mark of his deafness so that all, and especially the stranger, may experience the full force of the disability. Here is Mark's contribution, Mark's part of the conversation,

06 Mark. He slipped down. I'll get him/  
 09 Mark. I have to put this in his ear.  
 12 Mark. Because he's...he's very deaf.  
 16 Mark. He's very deaf. You'll have to talk  
 17 through....  
 20 Mark. Yeah.  
 23 Mark. Yes. (p.72: 06-23). When these

two conversations are experienced at once with the stranger caught between them and involved in both,

07 Teacher. What thing?  
 10 Teacher. Tried what? (p.72: 07 & 10), they have a quite startling effect. The teacher in role is confronted by the blind and deaf father, who does not see what is happening and cannot hear too clearly, and who came to this unhappy pass because he climbed the mountain. The two parts come together in the stranger's

awful realisation of what it means;

- 18 Teacher.       What you mean the..he..he tried to  
19                   get up the mountain like I am?  
20 Mark.       (Yeah.  
21 Julia.       (Yes.  
22 Teacher.     And this happened to him?  
23 Mark.       Yes.  
24 Julia.       Oh yes... (p.72: 18-24). We shall be

able to see, as we put these conversations back together again, how everybody contributes to the business of stripping away the illusions which seem to confound the stranger. Here is what happens.

56. As soon as the presentation of the blind man is complete, the stranger and the father greet one another (p.72: 03 & 05). They are now linked together for each one is justified by the other's presence, and their 'hellos' acknowledge this. The guardians now return to the climb and the dangers which it holds for all who attempt it. The important thing, of course, is that the stranger comes to appreciate for himself the consequences of his actions, and so the introduction is vague and oblique; it is almost casual,

'He slipped down.' (p.72: 06). As he sets this part of the conversation going, Mark also introduces the hearing trumpet,

'I'll get him/' (p.72: 06), and though the end of his contribution is not recoverable from the transcript, he clearly says and does enough to let the stranger see what is happening,

'What thing?' (p.72: 07). Julia, though, is right beside him and keeps him in mind of the climb,

'When he first tried it.' (p.72: 08), even as Mark holds up the hearing trumpet,

'I have to put this in his ear.' (p.72: 09). But this stranger, like the blind man before him, does not hear too well, and besides, he is overwhelmed by the state of the figure and the feeling there is something that he does not know,

'Tried what?' (p.72: 10). So Julia, gently and without fuss, makes the connection and in so doing binds the old man to the stranger,

'Coming up the mountain.' (p.72: 11). Still the stranger says nothing; it is as if he does not hear.

'I have to put this in his ear.  
Because he's...he's very deaf.' (p.72: 09 & 12)  
continues Mark, and still the stranger does not speak.

'He went up a second time,  
blind.' (p.72: 13-14), says Julia, but he does not seem to hear.

'He's very deaf. You'll have to talk  
through....' (p.72: 16-17), and here, by the deaf and blind father is the stranger, who could not see what was really happening ('Don't they seem nice?', 'He must be very old, I expect.'), and would not hear nor understand the things they were saying to him.

57. But now he does seem to understand. Mark and Julia knew that this old man, this symbol of the stranger and his intentions, this blind and deaf father, would be more powerful than anything they could say or do, if only they could present him properly and help the stranger to make the right connections(39). I think

that with the teacher in role they do succeed in drawing out the symbolic purpose of the blind, deaf father. It is only now that we can see how they succeeded.

58. But these guardians are not finished with him yet.

(p.72)

24 Julia. Oh yes...  
 25 He went up a second time blind. My  
 26 husband went up and helped him.  
 27 Teacher. And you never got to the top?  
 28 Julia. Oh yes (he got to the top.  
 29 Mark. (We got to the top. He's a  
 (p.73)

01 Mark. member of the tribe now.  
 02 Julia. He went back down to the bottom and then  
 03 had to come all the way back up....the  
 04 way you've come again.  
 05 Teacher. Yeah.  
 06 Julia. To get here to live with us.  
 07 Mark. Yes.  
 08 Teacher. But....but when he started was he  
 09 perfectly all right?  
 10 Julia. Oh (yes.  
 11 Mark. (Of course he was.  
 12 Julia. He just had a slight limp in his leg  
 13 though.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 72-73)

59. How easy it would have been to let the father fail in his attempt, to say, for instance, "No, he never got there, and neither will you; all this suffering and for nothing". But these children know what they are about and they know how much more effective it will be if the father had succeeded and yet ended up like this. They are saying, "This man has done all that you want to do. He has achieved all that you want to achieve, and look at him, blind and deaf and broken".

'Oh yes he got to the top. He's a member of the tribe now.' (p.72: 29 to p.73: 01)

But before he set out on his journey he was,

'..perfectly all right.' (p.73: 09), except, that is,

for a

'...slight limp in his leg....' (p.73: 12). The guardians are self-assured and full of confidence. They know where they are and know what they can do. They are enjoying themselves within the drama and they certainly give the teacher in role as the stranger plenty to think about. They show him the consequences for one who came,

'..all the way....the way you've come again.' (p.73: 03-04).

60. We can finish this section by looking at the meeting between the blind man and the stranger.

(p.73)

14 Teacher. Can I speak to him?  
 15 Julia. (Oh yes.  
 16 Mark. (Yes.  
 17 Teacher. Do I just shout...just shout at him?  
 18 Julia. I'll bring you the horn \*\*\*\*\*.  
 19 Teacher. Does he?  
 20 Mark. Yes. Don't talk too softly though/  
 21 Teacher. No.  
 22 Mark. because he's very/  
 23 Julia. There you are.  
 24 Mark. hard of hearing.  
 25 Teacher. Oh.  
 26 Julia. Speak through his horn.  
 27 Teacher. Hello.  
 28 Ian. Hello.  
 29 Teacher. I..I...I'm trying to climb up the

(p.74)

01 Teacher. mountain too. Is that a good idea?  
 02 Ian. No.  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 73-74)

61. As the presentation of the blind, deaf father has been so successful, little is required of the meeting beyond some kind of acknowledgement that the old man's purpose in the drama has been served. The stranger is well aware of what he stands for by now, and so the actual meeting is perfunctory;

Teacher. I..I...I'm trying to climb up the

mountain too. Is that a good idea?  
 Ian. No. (p.73: 29 to p.74: 02). This  
 answer comes as no surprise for everyone knows already  
 what his reply will be. However, this meeting, though  
 so short, works to make the symbol of the broken man  
 even more potent. All the preamble to their talk  
 together serves to concentrate our attention on the old  
 man's deafness;

Teacher. Can I speak to him?  
 Julia. (Oh yes.  
 Mark. (Yes.  
 Teacher. Do I just shout...just shout at him?  
 Julia. I'll bring you the horn \*\*\*\*\*.  
 Teacher. Does he?  
 Mark. Yes. Don't talk too softly though/  
 Teacher. No.  
 Mark. because he's very/  
 Julia. There you are.  
 Mark. hard of hearing.  
 Teacher. Oh.  
 Julia. Speak through his horn. (p.73: 14-26)

The deafness and all this business with the hearing horn  
 forces the stranger to confront and come to terms with  
 his own disability. It is one thing to see a blind man  
 being led on, and quite another to have to shout at him  
 through a horn in order to be heard. The stranger, in  
 making the symbol visible has a greater understanding of  
 what it represents, and so do we. This understanding is  
 developed through his active participation as he shouts  
 at the deaf man.

62. These are only eight year old children doing a bit  
 of drama in their lunch hour, yet they manage to bring  
 together a blind man who needs a guide and a stranger;  
 one who looks like him, intends to travel the same path  
 and only sees things as they seem to be. It is quite

impressive, and though not 'King Lear' one may remember and be reminded of Gloucester, who ever stumbled when he saw.

63. Do I read too much into all this? Well, in a way, yes; but no more than can be read into it, and I can account for my interpretation as I refer to those things which the people involved say and do. I can justify my point of view, and I am using their presentation to make sense of what they have achieved. This is just as those involved must do if they are to see what is happening, make sense of what is going on and contribute in a proper way. Other might see it all quite differently, or more, or less, but they will have to account for what they see(40).

64. And this shows that, in engagements of this kind, we do not have to 'talk down' to the children or work on some 'childish' level, for the experience may be taken by all concerned on different levels. Like good 'children's' fiction they can be stimulating to adult and child alike. This is very important, for we may spend a working life amongst young children and we have to find ways of making that experience intellectually and emotionally stimulating, for ourselves as well as for the children. The teacher's time in the classroom is important too.

#### ALL THAT REMAINS.

65. We shall have to look at the remaining part of the transcript (long though it may be) as a whole, for it

really will not bear breaking into pieces.

(p.74)

03 Teacher. What do you think? Do you think we ought  
 04 to go on?  
 05 Bev. Yes.  
 06 Julia. It is a bit dangerous but I'm sure if  
 07 your...  
 08 Mark. I'm sure you'll make it.  
 09 Julia. if your em..guides can help you...  
 10 (I'm sure you'll be able to make it.  
 11 Teacher. (Well...I mean..I think...I might make  
 12 it, but..I mean, you know...I want to  
 13 join the village but I don't want to  
 14 be like..like this.  
 15 Julia. Where...where do you come from?  
 16 Bev. If you want to join the village/  
 17 Teacher. Yes?  
 18 Bev. (you've got to go up.  
 19 Shirley. (You've got to carry on.  
 20 Teacher. What even if I'm like that.....left like  
 21 that?  
 22 Shirley. Yes.  
 23 Teacher. \*\*\*\* afterwards? I mean, I don't..you  
 24 know..I'd love to join your village but  
 25 you know, I mean, I do like to be  
 26 healthy and..look at this poor fellow...  
 27 you know..I mean....  
 28 Mark. Well you could of course take a boat  
 29 down to the bottom and get/

(p.75)

01 Teacher. Can I?  
 02 Mark. out without being seen.  
 03 Bev. You are young.  
 04 Teacher. Can I?  
 05 Shirley. (No.  
 06 Mark. (I could take you down now if you wanted.  
 07 Teacher. Could you/  
 08 Bev. No.  
 09 Teacher. And you could probably take me down  
 10 another route so I didn't meet those  
 11 horrible people.  
 12 Julia. (Excuse me a minute.  
 13 Mark. (Yes.  
 14 Teacher. Oh, that sounds/  
 15 Bev. (You've got to go.  
 16 Shirley. (No.  
 17 Teacher. Look, I think/  
 18 Bev. You've got to go up yet.  
 19 Teacher. Well, it's not that important.  
 20 Teacher. You've got to go.  
 21 Bev. Yes it is.  
 22 Teacher. It seems such a long way away now since  
 23 we set off and..and/  
 24 Julia. (Excuse me.  
 25 Bev. (You've got to go to the/



26 Teacher. I think/  
 27 Julia. Excuse  
 28 me?  
 29 Teacher. Yes? (p.76)

01 Julia. Could you tell us please, why you want  
 02 to join the village?  
 03 Teacher. Well, I..I don't really have very many  
 04 friends at home and I've come a long way  
 05 and I....they all looked so friendly and  
 06 (they seemed to get on so well.  
 07 Julia. (Oh. Have you got your Bible with you?  
 08 Bev. If you want to join the village/  
 09 Teacher. No, I haven't  
 10 actually.  
 11 Bev. you've got to go right to the top.  
 12 Mark. \*\*\*\*\* take very long.  
 13 Teacher. Well I know and I'm...look..I want you  
 14 to realise how grateful I am/  
 15 Julia. (You'd better take  
 16 this Bible... (We're all honest.  
 17 Shirley. (for bringing me this far.  
 18 Teacher. (when you go to the god.  
 19 Julia. I see.  
 20 Teacher. Yes (and scrape the name off.  
 21 Julia. (And you can come down with me to  
 22 Mark. the boat.  
 23 We're all honest.  
 24 Bev. Well, I think I'll probably/  
 25 Teacher. We're honest.  
 26 Bev. Because...you know..do you know/  
 27 Teacher. If you do,  
 28 Shirley. we'll tell. (p.77)

01 Teacher. Well/  
 02 Bev. We'll tell.  
 03 Teacher. I'm ever so grateful....but..I don't  
 04 think I'd be very good for your village.  
 05 I think you've got...  
 06 Shirley. You've got to.  
 07 Teacher. You've worked so well there/  
 08 Julia. I think you'd be a  
 09 (lot better going down in the boat.  
 10 Teacher. (and.....and. We'll that's what I'm  
 11 (beginning to think too.  
 12 Julia. (Much safer.  
 13 Bev. No he won't.  
 14 Shirley. No he won't.  
 15 Julia. (It is a lot safer.  
 16 Mark. (Yes he would.  
 17 Shirley. It may be a lot safer but/  
 18 Mark. He can join some  
 19 other tribe \*\*\*\*\* This is a hard  
 20 tribe (to get in, you know.  
 21 Julia. (\*\*\*\*\* the way down. He's come

22 half way up now so the gods are still  
 23 with him.  
 24 Shirley. No. He's got to go up.  
 25 Mark. No, (he can go down with the/  
 26 Bev. (He's got to go up.  
 27 Julia. Where did you leave your shoes?  
 28 Teacher. I see this poor man here and/  
 29 Julia. Where did you leave  
 (p.78)  
 01 your shoes?  
 02 Teacher. It really worries (me.  
 03 Shirley. (Come on, we've got  
 04 to go.  
 05 Bev. We've got...we've got (to go.  
 06 Shirley. (To go.  
 07 Teacher. What about him?  
 08 Bev. (We've got to go.  
 09 Shirley. (We've got to go.  
 10 Mark. But you've forgotten your shoes.  
 11 Bev. We've got to go.  
 12 Mark. Right. Come on, I'm going to take you  
 13 down in the boat.  
 14 Shirley. No.  
 15 Bev. No.  
 16 Shirley. We've got to go.  
 17 [and the guides drag the stranger away  
 18 up the mountain]  
 19 Teacher. Right. OK. Great.  
 20 Now.....  
 (Extract from the transcript, pages 74-78)

Now that the teacher in role as the stranger feels that all has been accomplished and it is time for a decision, he brings in the guides again;

'What do you think? Do you think we ought to go on?' (p.74: 03-04). Their response, of

course, is predictable. For him, though, the decision has already been taken and the guardians, who have said nothing directly to persuade him to turn back, are yet sure that they have prevailed and can now afford to enjoy themselves and even give him a bit of encouragement;

Julia. It is a bit dangerous but I'm sure if your...  
 Mark. I'm sure you'll make it.  
 Julia. if your em..guides can help you...

I'm sure you'll be able to make it.  
(p.74: 06-10).

They have managed to stop him, but they still want him to think well of them, and so they lead him into the business of 'backing down with dignity', which he, of course, is concerned to achieve(41);

'Well...I mean...I think...I might make it, but...I mean, you know...' (p.74: 11-12). He has been this way before, and they all know exactly what he means for he shows everyone that his mind is changed;

'..I want to join the village but I don't want to be like..like this.' (p.74: 12-14). It is not surprising that the guides are quick to take his meaning, and they restate the position in the plainest terms;

Bev. If you want to join the village/  
Teacher. Yes?  
Bev. (you've got to go up.  
Shirley. (You've got to carry on. (p.74: 16-19).

There is a price to be paid and it is there before him,

'What even if I'm like that.....left like that....afterwards?'  
'Yes.' (p.74: 20-23). It is a price that he is not prepared to pay and so he continues the business of trying to account for his decision to turn back and make it seem reasonable to the guides. He turns the responsibility for his change of heart away from himself and onto a stubborn and unforgiving world 'out there' which has served to confound his good intentions,

'I mean, I don't..you know..I'd love to join your village but...' (p.74: 23-24), and he points to the consequences,

'...this poor fellow...' (p.74: 26). We take away

responsibility for our actions as we show ourselves to be at the mercy of this harsh world, as we show ourselves to be blown hither and thither by circumstance and the force of events. Unfortunately, we also deny our humanity when we explain our actions in terms of cause and effect, and accounting for our bad behaviour in this way does us little good(42).

66. Certainly no one is in any doubt about the way he feels, and Mark sees his opportunity and now offers him a way out,

' Well you could of course take a boat  
down to the bottom and get...out  
without being seen.' (p.74: 28 to p.75: 02). The

timing is perfect, and the stranger is whipped along on the promise of safety and a quick journey home,

Mark. Well you could of course take a boat  
down to the bottom and get/  
Teacher. Can I?  
Mark. out without being seen.  
Bev. You are young.  
Teacher. Can I?  
Shirley. (No.  
Mark. (I could take you down now if you wanted.  
Teacher. Could you/  
Bev. No.  
Teacher. And you could probably take me down  
another route so I didn't meet those  
horrible people.  
Julia. (Excuse me a minute.  
Mark. (Yes.  
Teacher. Oh, that sounds/ (p.74: 28 to p.75: 14)

The teacher in role as the stranger even tells Mark what Mark can do to help. It is in vain now for the guides to try to argue against this kind of conviction in order to check his headlong rush. From the moment when they come to see how his mind is changed, they fall back upon imperatives,

'You've got to go up.'

'You've got to carry on.' (p.74: 18 & 19), and

Beverley's attempt to disassociate him from the symbol of the old man by appealing to his pride,

'You are young.' (p.75: 03), seems to make no impression. They feel, as the stranger feels, that the argument is over and that the terms of the drama are fulfilled. There is no more for them to say but,

'No.'

'No.'

'You've got to go.'

'No.'

'You've got to go up yet.'

'You've got to go.' (p.75: 08-20), and so on and so

on.

67. But the stranger is still trying to get out of his commitment well, and so he attempts to play down the importance of what is going on,

'Well, it's not that important.' (p.75: 19). It was a false move, though, and Beverley snaps back waspishly,

'Yes it is.' (p.75: 21). But really the spirit has gone out of them, and the stranger is left to try another tactic to cope with his shame,

'It seems such a long way away now since we set off and..and/' (p.75: 22-23), and all that

Beverley can say is,

'You've got to go to the [top].' (p.75: 25).

68. Which is where it might have ended, except that something else is also going on. As it becomes clear to everyone that the guardians have won the day, Julia tries to interrupt the action. We can only speculate as to why she does this: maybe she is concerned to keep the

drama going now that the end is apparently so near; maybe she is 'challenging' the teacher through her role in the dramatic context; maybe she simply wants to delay the action as the teacher did before. In any case it is clear that she is interrupting, for her contribution is outside the developing situation and not readily acceptable. Just as the stranger is caught up by Mark's offer of escape, Julia attempts to get his attention,

'Excuse me a minute.' (p.75: 12). She is unsuccessful for it is not marked. It seemed like a good opportunity to interrupt as the stranger declared his intention, but it did not work. Perhaps it was ineffectual because Beverley and Shirley were still holding his attention as they tried to batter him into submission beneath their blast of imperatives. Anyway, she tries again a moment later as the stranger is about the business of trying to justify his decision and make his change of mind acceptable,

'Excuse me.' (p.75: 24). But Beverley is still busy and she has to try again,

'Excuse me?' (p.75: 27-28). This time she is successful. It is not immediately clear from the transcript why this attempt should succeed whilst the others failed but it is clear that when a contribution does not fit into the developing context, then even someone as articulate as Julia has to work quite hard to make it acceptable. The dramatic context puts constraints upon people like Julia as well as upon the

teacher.

69. She asks him why he wants to join the village. He makes an interesting reply,

'Well, I..I don't really have very many friends at home and I've come a long way and I....they all looked so friendly and they seemed to get on so well.' (p.76: 03-06).

Superficially, this seems to be another account of why he wanted to make the climb. However, he uses it to support his decision not to climb. She finds as he speaks that he is filled with doubt, that he did not 'really have very many friends', that the villagers 'all looked so friendly and...seemed to get on so well'. She finds that he had 'come a long way' and would have been tired and lonely and may not have seen things too clearly. In other words, in giving reasons for his concern to climb, he presents them in a way which shows them to be inadequate. He shows them to be unreasonable reasons (based upon the way things 'looked' and 'seemed' at the time) that he ought now to reject as he has come to see more clearly. He uses his explanation to take the ground from under him, and thereby shows his decision not to go seem much more reasonable and responsible. No one is in any doubt about this statement, it is just another means by which excuses are made, and they will have heard others working in this way as they downgrade their own motives in order to make a change of heart explicable. Julia, certainly understands what is going on, and she takes delight in the knowledge by 'playing' with him and

pretending that he still intends to go,

Julia. Oh. Have you got your Bible with you?

Teacher. No, I haven't actually.

Julia. You'd better take this Bible...  
when you go to the god.

Teacher. I see.

Julia. Yes and scrape the name off.

(p.76: 07-21). This is

the final irony, for Julia helps to 'prepare' the stranger for his meeting with the great god which she has ensured will never take place. She even gives him her Bible(43).

70. Beverley also knows what the stranger means and, once again, she restates the position in its plainest terms,

'If you want to join the village...

you've got to go right to the top.' (p.76: 08 & 11).

Shirley appreciates what is happening as well and, for the first time in the drama, she takes advantage of the knowledge which they all share (as pupils doing drama) and which was 'given' at the beginning. She shows that she knows the guardians are only pretending to be nice. She shows that as a guide (as well as Shirley doing some drama) she appreciates that these guardians only appear friendly. She cries out,

'We're all honest.' (p.76: 17). She is careful not to say how she knows, but it is still a desperate move for she is drawing upon another level of meaning and one that can threaten the dramatic context. Perhaps, though, she has no choice, and Beverley is quick to take up the cry,



'We're all honest...we're honest.' (p.76: 24 & 26). Even so, it fails to work

for the wretched stranger is still bent upon departing gracefully,

'...look..I want you to realise how grateful I am..for bringing me this far..' (p.76: 13-18).

70. The guides cannot seem to get through to him at all, and in desperation, they fall back on the last sanction of the school child,

'If you do, we'll tell.' (p.76: 28-29). This is a very risky tactic, for it drags the everyday experience of 'teachers and pupils' right into the drama. There is a shift of realities as when Beverley warned the teacher in role of the wire at his feet(44). One feels that in both cases those involved lost control and reacted impulsively; Shirley out of desperation and Beverley from deep fears about electricity and dangerous wires. Their behaviour is not meaningless (we can easily account for what they are doing) but it takes us beyond the dramatic context. We feel that they are subject to other forces and impulses which drive and control. They seem to be just reacting. It is the kind of effect that accidents have upon our lives when our humanity is threatened and we are seen as no more but physical bodies bumping around in the world. It is not the threat contained within the words which gives Julia pause, but the reminder they bring of the frailty of the dramatic context and the ease with which it can be destroyed. Beverley, too, appreciates its force,

'We'll tell.' (p.77: 02), and Julia, for the first time, openly declares her interest,

'I think you'd be a lot better going down in the boat.' (p.77: 08-09). It might still appear to be couched in terms of his interest but it does not sound like that. She is telling him what to do. This is clear, precise and unambiguous, and she supports it by pointing to that which worries him most. She tells him that it will be,

'Much safer.' (p.77: 12), and we know how it will be safer, for we know what these guardians can do.

72. There is very little, though, that the guides can do now except stamp their feet,

'No he won't.'

'No he won't.' (p.77: 13 & 14), and they cannot deny it would be much safer,

'It may be a lot safer but/' (p.77: 17). It would have been good to know what Shirley was going to say here but we never shall(45), for Mark and Julia are concerned to make the change of mind easy for the stranger, and are anxious to keep him from being too upset by his failure to climb the mountain,

'This is a hard tribe to get in, you know.' (p.77: 19-20), and besides,

'He can join some other tribe.' (p.77: 18-19). They are determined to let him down as carefully as they took him up,

'He's come half way up now so the gods are still with him.' (p.77: 21-23). That must be comforting.

THE ENDING.

73. And it ought to be consoling. However, they know, as he knows, that in failing the test he is still become as the blind man,

'I see this poor man here and...  
It really worries me. What  
about him?' (p.77: 28 to p.78: 07). What about him

indeed? They treat the stranger now as one who cannot help himself, as a poor thing, tossed this way and that between the guardians and the guides,

'No he won't.'  
'Yes he would.' (p.77: 14 & 16)  
'No. He's got to go up.'  
'No, he can go down...' (p.77: 24 & 25). They treat

him as one who must be looked after and guided all the way, and they talk about him as though he could say nothing for himself. He is disabled in that they treat him as helpless,

'Where did you leave your shoes?' (p.77: 27 & 29)  
'But you've forgotten your shoes.' (p.78: 10). They

treat him as a child in need of a guardian,

'Right. Come on, I'm going to take you  
down in the boat.' (p.78: 12-13), and they take him

in hand.

74. In the end, words fail,

Come on, we've got to go.  
We've got...we've got to go.  
To go.  
We've got to go.  
We've got to go.  
We've got to go.

No.

No.

We've got to go. (p.78: 03-16), and the guides drag

the stranger off, and up the mountain to see the great  
god.

75. All that remains is for the teacher to officially end the drama, and he does so by slipping back into the everyday experience of 'teachers and pupils doing some drama'. So he evaluates their work,

'Right. OK. Great.' (p.78: 19), and he puts down another 'marker' and sets about initiating another teaching situation,

'Now...' (p.78: 20).

#### DRAMA AS A WELL-MADE PLAY.

76. I referred in a note at the beginning of this chapter to the direct link which Michael Fleming made between structure and aesthetic meaning(46). He later raises a possible objection to this when he writes,

'It is all very well using the sophisticated notion of aesthetic meaning to apply to poetry and in particular to a piece of Shakespeare verse, the language of which resonates with profound meaning but is it not far-fetched and something of a conceit to apply the same concept to an infant play on witches or a fourth year secondary school improvisation about a strike? The language of these plays can hardly be said to be dense with imagery and subtle nuances'(47).

77. I simply do not believe that objections of this kind carry weight. Whilst this piece of drama is certainly not a Shakespeare play, it is a play. It may not be a very good play, but it does not lack imagery nor subtle nuances, and surely we could say that the language 'resonates with meaning' even though it may not be very profound. Clearly, too, it will bear the kind of criticism usually reserved for literary texts. It does not fall apart when looked at in this way, and it

appears to be ordered and controlled. It appears to be purposeful. It looks as if those involved know what they are doing. There might not be the same 'focal attention to form'(48) but this does not mean that it is formless or that those involved are not concerned about the form. Indeed, they are concerned about the form from the moment they set about presenting a familiar and meaningful experience. They cannot help but be, for it is the underlying form (of which they may not be aware as it is being produced) which gives to the situation a sense of stability and enables us to take part. It is aspects of this form which we have tried to uncover in this study.

78. I still find it surprising that a piece of children's drama such as this should be so tightly structured; the more so as I was involved and know that no such thought went into it. Nevertheless, it is important to look at it in this way, for it enables us to see what goes on as we present experience dramatically. Further, we are likely to be encouraged by what is achieved. It is worthwhile seeing how the participants and their audience make it meaningful, and I think we should be impressed by their sensitivity and by the close attention they pay to those about them and to the dramatic context they are involved in creating. But do not think now that I am asking you to praise this drama, for it is a very ordinary example of its kind. There was little thought or planning, little preparation

and I have been keenly aware, whilst looking at the transcript, of the missed opportunities and my failure as a teacher to help the children draw out the implications of what they have learned. For they have learned, as they have taken part in the presentation of this 'form of life', and I would ask you to consider the possibilities of such a kind of drama in the hands of those capable of drawing the children into situations where they really confront the consequences of all that they say and do. For the moment, just look at what they have done; do not consider too deeply what it is that they have put into the drama for there are no answers to that, but see what you can take from it. Just look. We have to appreciate what is achieved in a piece of work like this.

79. Further, should we not give the children the opportunity to respond to their creation? Should we not let them see what they have done, appreciate their achievement? Let us give them the chance to take on the role of the literary critic or the social observer (as I have done in trying to explain and account for happens), and give them the opportunity to 'make explicit what is implicit in the symbol'(49). A transcript is demanding to produce, but even a short extract is enough to help young juniors see something of what has been done(50). It might even be worthwhile recording and transcribing some of the everyday talk of the classroom and see what they make of that. I am not suggesting that this kind

of activity should happen every time we present experience dramatically, for it could not anyway, but it is worth doing now and again. These people ought to see what they have achieved and appreciate something of the complexity of that achievement. They ought to be able to look at what they have done objectively, as they should be encouraged to connect their experience with other places and other times. They should be able to reflect upon the managed quality of their work.

80. Seeing this piece of drama as a well-made play has another level of significance. The drama appears like this because we have a transcript before us and not because of any quality which is embedded in the drama itself. We can look at it now with hindsight and draw out a story, and as we do that we impose our structure upon the work. The same sense of story would not be apparent as it was created, only as we make sense of each contribution in the light of what has gone before, only as we take time to connect. It is this kind of activity which an audience engages in as it watches a play. We find the 'meaningfulness' of the experience as we are able to consider it from a detached position. This is the sense in which we produce a meaningful 'world' through our 'accounting practices'(51), for it is within these 'accounts' that we find our lives to have a sense of stability. Through the use of story and narrative we give to our experience a sense of structure. So, rather than reflecting the world of

everyday life, such 'fictions' describe it in ways which we find meaningful, ways that enable us to 'see' it, and see it as real(52). The structure, though, is in our accounting, in our narratives, and whilst we may think our stories describe the social life, that life is made real and visible through our stories and the way in which we tell them. I describe a visit to the supermarket and in that description lies the experience; it is the experience in that it connects (or focuses upon) a collection of 'happenings' in such a way that they may be recognised as a visit to the supermarket. Through my accounting I give particular 'movements and events' significance. We are not describing what happens, we are making sense of what happens. This account of the dramatic activity is very different from the 'layman's view' expressed in chapter one; indeed, one might feel that it turns that view upon its head. Instead of drama reflecting the real world, that world is made visible and 'real' through the work done by people concerned to present experience dramatically.

81. In this way drama (the make-believe) is a necessary part of the business of giving the social life a sense of stability and meaningfulness, and it works to achieve this on two levels. Firstly, in that the 'make-believe' aspect of the 'managed accomplishment' is treated as make-believe, it reinforces the sense of facticity which upholds our experience of everyday life, and provides a means of coping with threats to that



facticity ('He's only joking!' and 'It's just a play'). We need such a make-believe world or we would be overwhelmed by experience(53). In the second place, the make-believe experience provides the sense of story, and the structure by which we are able to treat the everyday experience as being 'real'. We feel that it is a reflection of this world of everyday living (albeit a special kind of reflection with 'heightened consciousness' or 'aesthetic meaning') and is, therefore, depicting an underlying structure in everyday life which can be made meaningful through activities of this kind. We treat life as meaningful (and therefore find it so) because we can tell stories about that life. In this sense our 'fictions' are reassuring for they provide our life with stability. If 'it is in retrospect that a play tells a story', as Gavin Bolton suggests(54), then it is also 'in retrospect' that our everyday life is made meaningful, and the play is one of the ways in which that is done(55).

A study of this kind is not going to produce conclusions, but if it helps us to see more clearly the nature of real and make-believe experience and enables us to appreciate the managed quality of our lives, and if it can encourage us to put children in touch with the spontaneous learning which is a feature of everyday experience and draw our attention to the kind of teaching which brings this about, and if it can lead to

an awareness that the aesthetic quality may not be an aspect of drama (or any art form) but rather a perception (however dimly felt) of the patterned, structured, ordered nature of our lives and of the managed quality of that patterning, structure and order, then it will have been worthwhile. All of this may come to pass if we can feel that the dramatic presentation of experience puts us directly in touch with the business of making visible the social life, if we can come to appreciate that it is an aspect of our lives rather than something we do with them.

I believe this to be well worth working for.

